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BRAMBLES

AND

BAY LEAVES:

ESSAYS ON THE HOMELY AND THE BEAUTIFUL.

BY

SHIRLEY HIBBERD,

(AUTHOR OF "SUMMER SONGS." ETC., ETC.)

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"A thing of beauty is a joy for ever ;
Its loveliness increases ; it can never
Pass into nothingness, but still will keep
A bower quiet for us, and a sleep
Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing."

KEATS.

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P R E F A C E.

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THOUGH somewhat miscellaneous in subject, the reader will easily perceive a consonance of purpose in the various Essays contained in this volume. The papers were written at various times during the intervals of severe, though not uncongenial, duties, and are but several expressions of the same sentiment. That sentiment is the love of Nature, and more especially of that portion of Nature which is represented in the out-door life of "green things," embodying, as they do, a thousand suggestions of their relations to the life of man, closely woven and encircled as he is by a net-work of beauty, which gives a joy to his calmer hours, and enables him to perceive, both by reason and analogy, his position in the general scheme of creation. If the love of simple things does no more for us than to quicken our perceptions, and enlarge the circle of our pleasures, it is certainly a love

which, in that direction, exalts us, and gives us many whisperings of the greatness of the Power under whose control the worlds perform their ceaseless march, and the seasons observe the times appointed them. If we can now and then turn aside from the feverish hurry of commercial life—a life fraught with tendencies to deaden the finer sympathies of our nature—if we can now and then turn aside to breathe and enjoy the cool air of mountain groves, and to listen to the music of falling waters, and the murmurs of many voices; we shall thereby enlarge the circle of our emotions, and quicken our sense of appreciation for things which lie around and above us.

This ministration of dew-drops and red sun-sets is not appointed in vain; it is a ministration to the heart rather than to the brain of man, and teaches him the lesson of his moral life, of which, under the excitement of worldly avocations, he too often becomes oblivious.

These papers, such as they are, are expressions of a passion which has grown with me under the sober study of natural changes and simple things, all of which, viewed through the imagination with the help of thought, afford us an insight into the poetical uses of natural forms and phenomena, and

add to our life solaces and resources, generally too much neglected, because too little known.

The merits and demerits of "BRAMBLES AND BAY LEAVES" are equally to be attributed to enthusiasm; and should my enthusiasm, as expressed herein, prove welcome to a few congenial spirits, I shall be amply repaid for the risk of publication, and shall hope, in other labours of a kindred kind, to meet with readers who love, or wish to love, "green things" as sincerely as I do.

SHIRLEY HIBBERD.

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BRAMBLES AND BAY LEAVES.

GRASS AND OTHER GREEN THINGS.

WHAT a desert-like spot would this life of ours be,
If, amid sands of sin, no glimpse could we see
Of some green-knotted garland of grass,—
Some oasis bright, a glad hope to impart,
That the sun of the sky, and the sun of the heart,
Still abide in the road we must pass.

JOHNSON BARKER.

The golden-belted bees humm'd in the air,
The tall silk-grasses bent and waved along.

THOMAS MILLER.

We cannot pass a blade of grass unheeded by the way,
For it whispers to our thoughts, and we its silent voice obey.

J. E. CARPENTER.

It is a significant fact, that Nature paints all her pictures with very few colours. The scenery of the whole world, with all its diversities of hill and dale, land and sea, mountain, moorland, or fruitful valley, jungle, waste, or wayside, is painted with little else than two colours. The earth and sky, with their manifold beauty and variety, are painted with but two prominent tints, blue and green. It is very simple; but with what cunning art does Nature trick out an infinity of wild beauty, dotting each little spot of the broad earth with a picture of its own, which, in all her multitudinous representations, will never be repeated. Philosophers tell us that this blue above and green below is the combination which, while giving the heart and the eye an equal satisfac-

tion and solace, is, at the same time, the best adapted for the continual exercise of the visual powers. The soft azure heaven, which folds us in its dewy arms, and lifts our souls nearer up to God, is said to derive its beauty from the refraction of the rays of light in passing through the air. The lovely green hue which overspreads the earth like the laughter of Nature herself, and which, by its winning tenderness, seems planted here to make the soul contented with its earthly lot, is caused by the abundant and universal growth of grass, which is, indeed, the poetic spirit of the world, for it hides, with a delicious verdure, the grim realities of nature, and clothes the sordid facts of earth and iron with a garment of life and beauty. From the constant freshness, fragrance, and fruitfulness of grass, it has been a hallowed thing in all ages of the world, and has mingled alike with the outpourings of the human heart, the voices and harmonies of nature in her teachings of poetic love, and the struggles for power or freedom, and the grim scenes wherein the human heart has paid the tribute of its blood to superstition, oppression, and despotism. It would seem meet, therefore, that something should be said of grass and other green things in order that those who tread on them unheedingly, may know something of their history, and those who have listened to the teachings of the out-door world, and welcomed its verdure into their sanctuary of love, may have its memories and images awakened within them, and so learn to love it more.

Then to the enamell'd meads
Thou go'st ; and as thy foot there treads,
Thou seest a present God-like power
Imprinted in each herb and flower.

HERRICK.

"GREEN things!"—and the mind calls them up in numberless pictures, that the heart may feast upon their beauty. "Green things," and we think of Virgil and his brown bees, Longus and his happy children, Keats and his green trees, "sprouting a shady boon for simple sheep ;" Chaucer and his dear daisies, which he rose early to see "against the sun spread ;" Robin Hood and the Lincoln green ; Shakspeare, Spenser, and Herrick, with their multiplied images, pictures, and allusions ; all living and fresh from the green world itself, and redolent of lime-tree perfume, dank moss, woodland echoes, velvet meadows, and all the associations which cling like halos of light around them. With green things, the human heart grows larger,

and human life more real. The hunter with his brown visage; the poet with his softened smile; the laughing infant and the grey old man, all feel the renovated touch of a life made of enchantments when they go into the world of birch-trees and knotty boles, and black-birds and brown uplands, and all draw thence an inspiration more wealthy than heart can fully feel, or mind can fairly reckon.

The story of the grass is the story of the world. Ere the creatures of the flood and field existed, the earth brought forth grass and herbs, so that when the earth should "bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle and creeping thing," they should find sustenance and enjoyment; and man, waking up from chaos at the will of the Omnipotent, should find himself in a home of greenness, with a soft carpet for his feet, a refreshing verdure to gladden his eye, and a living beauty to imbue his heart with holiness and peace. Well! upon the green turf he worshipped his God at sunrise, and upon the grassy ground he slept at nightfall; and when that greatest of his benedictions came—a dear partner for his life, and a companion to make complete the sweetness of his hours—it was on the green grass they walked together, singing hymns of joy, and mingling their affections with the happiness of the creatures.

————— Raised of grassy turf

Their table was, and mossy seats had round.

PARADISE LOST.

The leafy bowers were their mansions of beauty, and the grass made green the pathway to their temple of love.

Over the wide world the grass has no limits; it shoots up sharp and wiry on the dark moorland, that the red deer may bound over it without crushing its sprays, and without wakening the echoes with his footfall. It bends in luxuriant masses over the broad stream, and looks down into the pebbly depths, like Narcissus, at its own shadow; it hides away in the silent glens and nooks of the old forests, and waves its silken tassels in the dreamy light, where the flowers hold carnivals of fragrance, and the hollow trees sing the dirges of their youth; it spreads wide sheets of swelling verdure over thousands of miles in the swamps of the West; it shoots up in the sunny climates of the East to the stately height of forty or sixty feet,* and putting

* The bamboo and sugar-cane are both grasses.

forth its pensile sword-like leaves with all the grace and majesty of a palm, it flings around a profusion of fruits, and bestows invaluable medicines upon the grateful children of the soil; and wherever it is seen it makes a velvet carpet of emerald beauty—a carpet on which the heavy heart may sometimes tread, but on which joy mostly wanders; and from this universality of growth grass derives its specific name.

How joyously the grass springs forth with its cheerful face after the spring or summer shower; how rich and exuberant it looks, and how it starts before all other vegetation in the growing race of Spring! When the February winds are piping, and the old woods are shaken to their very hearts, the grass is the only plant which can dare the nipping blast; and the moment the frost breaks, it comes bristling up through the black earth to refresh us with its heavenly promise! Under its protecting roots the seeds of the last year's flowers are being sheltered, and its tufts soon form a canopy for the pale primrose, and the fairy cowslip, and the violet—

That morning-star of all the flowers,
The pledge of daylight's lengthening hours,
Which lifts up its dreamy eye of blue
To the younger sky of the self-same hue.

The bursting glory of the green Spring exhilarates the heart, and a new current of life flows through all the veins. Arcité felt it when he rose and looked on the merry day, and, leaping on his courser, dashed into the grove:—

And loud he sang against the sunne sheene—
O, May! with all thy flow'res and thy greene,
Right welcome be thou, faire freshe May!
I hope that I some greene here gotten may.
And from his courser, with a lusty heart,
Into the grove full hastily he start.*

The poets have all chosen it as the broad and universal token of the opening year. Thomson pictures the Spring as tripping over the grassy turf on her mission of fertility and beauty:—

Nor is the mead unworthy of thy foot;

* Chaucer—*The Knight's Tale*.

Full of fresh verdure, and unnumbered flowers,
The negligence of Nature, wide and wild.

Spenser, the most imaginative of the poets, and one of the heartiest lovers of green things, uses it as a symbol of the summer's approaching fulness :—

The joyous time now nigheth fast,
That shall alegge this bitter blast,
And slake the Winter sorrow.
Tho.—Sicker, Willye, thou warnest well;
For Winter's wrath begins to quell,
And pleasant Spring appeareth;
The grass now 'gins to be refresh'd,
The swallow peeps out of her nest,
And cloudy welkin cleareth.
Wil.—Seest not thilke same Hawthorn stud,
How bragly it begins to bud,
And utter his tender head?
Flora now calleth forth each flower,
And bids make ready Maia's bower.*

Wordsworth is as happy :—

The cock is crowing,
The stream is flowing,
The small birds twitter,
The lake doth glitter,
The green field sleeps in the sun ;
The oldest and youngest
Are at work with the strongest;
The cattle are grazing,
Their heads never raising;
There are forty feeding like one!
Like an army defeated,
The snow hath retreated,
And now doth fare ill
On the top of the bare hill;
The ploughboy is whooping—anon, anon :
There's joy in the mountains,
There's life in the fountains;
Small clouds are sailing,
Blue sky prevailing—
The rain is over and gone!

* Shepherd's Calendar.

So, in this joy of an awakened love for budding things, the poet has been the first to herald with the gush of song the glories of the grassy green. Whether he listened to the whistle of the blackbird, or the tinkling of the sheep-bells on the thymy hills, he has drawn the sweetest of his inspirations from the exhaustless fount of living and growing beauty, and from the lowly grass has gathered up the noblest melodies. How have all the nobles of the earth—the true nobles of thought and action, the spiritual aristocracy of the world—claimed brotherhood with humble things, and associated the hours of their lives, and replenished the altars of their loves, with the poetic teachings of green things, and the silent whispers of the grass! The Ettrick shepherd-boy, how he loved the grassy hills of his native land, and the bonny lark which found shelter amid the tufted sprays! His brother, too, the undaunted ploughman of the north; how has he woven the grassy herbage into his noble songs:—

Now in her green mantle blythe Nature arrays,
And listens the lambkins that bleat o'er the braes;
While birds warble welcome in ilka green shaw—
To me it's delightless—my Nannie's awa!

BURNS.

Did he shed tears upon the grass when the bitter world mocked him, and stung him to the quick?—the proudest of earth's children have wept upon the turf, and why not he? Homer loved the grass, and Shakspeare none the less. Who can recall to mind the lovely slopes beside the grassy Avon, without thinking of the poet-boy, when he used to lie musing on the green, holding converse with shapes invisible to mortal eyes—building up his mighty temple of the ideal, weaving the world, and all its joys and sorrows, into one great mesh of magic beauty, with the blue heaven and its sunshine above him, and the green-cushioned grass beneath? The sweetest of his conceits were gathered, like dew-drops, in the green wilderness. Witness his many fine expressions, as, “Lush and lusty grass:”* “Cold would never let grass grow;”† “Upon the grassy carpet;”‡ or still more freshly, as in the speech of Lysander:—

* The Tempest, Act ii., sc. 1.

† 2 King Henry VI., Act iii., sc. 2.

‡ King Richard II., Act iii., sc. 3.

To-morrow night, when Phœbe doth behold
Her silver visage in the watery glass,
Decking with liquid pearl the bladed grass.*

Again, in the song of the fairy:—

To wander everywhere
Swifter than the moon's sphere:
And I do serve the fairy queen,
To dew her orbs upon the green.†

It was on the "green plot,"‡ too, that Quince and his companions held the rehearsals of their revels. It is in the allusion to grass that the consolation which Gaunt offers to the banished Bolingbroke derives its cheering freshness and its sunny hope; he tells him—

All places that the eye of Heaven visits
Are, to a wise man, happy ports and havens.

* * * * *

Suppose

Devouring pestilence hangs in our air,
And thou art flying to a fresher clime.
Look, what thy soul holds dear, imagine it
To lie that way thou go'st, not that thou com'st.
Suppose the singing birds, musicians;
The grass whereon thou tread'st, the presence strew'd;
The flowers, fair ladies; and thy steps, no more
Than a delightful measure or a dance.§

The most noble of Shakspeare's songs are those which partake most of the rural character, and these embody choicer, fresher, quainter allusions to green things, than the songs of any other poet, either ancient or modern, of this or other countries.

Where shall we find anything which bears comparison with Falstaff's last hour, "babbling o' green fields;" or the magical scenery of the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, and the *Tempest*? Chaucer and Spenser are the only authors who dare be mentioned at such a moment. In his "nodding violets" and "kissing cherries," his "green holly"

* *Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act i., sc. 1.

† *Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act ii., sc. 1.

‡ *Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act iii., sc. 1.

§ *King Richard II.*, Act i., sc. 3.

and "strawberries" which "grow underneath," or in such passages as:—

The even mead that erst brought forth
The peckled cowslip, burnet, and green clover.

Or that finest of wood songs in the English language, which the wild Caliban, in his rugged simplicity, babbles as if it were no better than mere drunken talk:—

I pr'ythee, let me bring thee where crabs grow;
And I with my long nails will dig thee pig-nuts;
Show thee a jay's nest, and instruct thee how
To snare the nimble marmozet; I'll bring thee
To clustering filberds, and sometimes I'll get thee
Young sea-mells from the rock.

Perhaps there is nothing more lovely in the aspect of the grass, apart from its refreshing verdure and velvety softness, than its appearance at daybreak, when dotted all over with trembling orbs of dew—gems which the Night has let fall from her raven hair, and which the great "eye of the universe" dissolves when he wakes and looks down upon the world.

The poets have derived some of their most delightful images from these "tears" of Heaven, these droppings of manna from the sky:—

So sweet a kiss the morning sun gives out
To those fresh morning-drops upon the rose.*

—— Sip from herb the pearly tears
Of morning dew, and after break their fast
On greensward ground—a cool and grateful taste.†

A more delicious image still is that of Mickle, when he pictures the Spring as glistening with dew:—

Glistening with dew, the green-haired Spring
Walks through the woods, and, smiling in her train,
Youth glitters gay on cherub wing,
And life, exulting, lifts the eye to Heaven.‡

Not the less beautiful is the grass when considered as a garment to

* Love's Labours Lost, Act. iv., sc. 3.

† Dryden's *Virgil—Georgics*, B. iii.

‡ Mickle—*Ode* 3.

hide the rough nakedness of the earth, and veil its rugged face with lustre and beauty. No sooner does the black mountain-peak peer up above the ocean's breast, than the grasses hurry there upon the chariot of the wind, and cover it all over with a delicious green. The grim rock that frowns upon the foam is torn asunder by its roots, and its ledges and turrets made lovely by its leaves. The green meadows, swelling like seas of plenty into waves of verdure, are indebted to it for all their store of green, and for the flowers and feathered flutterers which find a home amongst its sprays. The old orchards need its velvet mounds and dimpled hollows, in order that the luscious fruits they fling to earth may fall unhurt on its soft pillows; and man, the possessor and monarch of the earth, looks complacently on its merry face, and feels that it links him to his home.

Is it only for its velvet softness, and the round pillowy knolls it heaves up in the vistas of the greenwood, that the weary and the dreamer find it so sweet a place of rest? or is it because the wild bee flits around its silvery panicles, and blows his bugle as he goes with a bounding heart to gather sweets; that the hare and the rabbit burrow beneath its smooth sward; that the dear lark covers amid its sprays, and cherishes the children of his bosom under its brown matted roots; that the daisy, the cowslip, the daffodil, the orchises—the fairies of the flower world—the bird's-foot trefoil—the golden-fingered beauty of the meadows, the little yellow and the large strawberry trefoil, are all sheltered and cherished by it, and that one of its simple children* scents the air for miles with the sweetest perfume ever breathed by man? If only for its fresh green hue, let the dreamer love it, let him lie thereon—

Vnder ye curtaine of ye greenwoode shade,
Beside ye brooke vpon ye velvet gras.†

And if thou, O reader, hast any nobler hope imprisoned in thy heart than that of cooking partridges, or measuring tape; if thou hast not exchanged the Druid's harp for bell-metal, nor suffered thy heroism to sink into hypocrisy, go out into the green wilderness, lie down upon the cushion of the grass, and pillow thy head upon its virgin

* *Anthoxanthum Odoratus*, or sweet-scented vernal grass, gives the peculiar rich aroma to the hay.

† Godfrey of Boulougne, B. x., s. 64.

beauty. Then shall the songs of the golden age be warbled in thine ear; then shall the spirit of love sweep thy heart-strings, to awaken the melodies of the Empyrean within thee; and an heritage of eternal beauty shall be thine, in the place of the fleshless fancies which now allure thee. Stay not here, creating dusty heavens, from which, like a wild beast, thou shalt be thrust hereafter, but go out free and glad and commune with the grass, and listen to its stories of the ages. Look back at the dim past, and learn the lesson of its faded peoples and crumbled empires; learn the ephemeral fleetness of human things, and the grand supremacy of Nature. The temples of the Sun, where eastern multitudes knelt in worship, have sunk down into white and ghastly ruins, and the grasses wave over their broken sculptures. The mighty caves of India, where darkness and mystery aided in the fearful work of bloody superstitions, are now choked up with weeds and herbage. The stately columns of Athens are woven with ivy, and violets, and grasses. The Roman Forum is a cow-market; the Tarpeian Rock a waste; and the Palace of the Cæsars a rope-walk! Rome herself, where is she? She is—

At once the grave, the city, and the wilderness;
And where her wrecks, like shattered mountains, rise,
The flowering weeds and fragrant copses dress
The bones of Desolation's nakedness.

SHELLEY.

It is the fate of all: the white stone obliterates the turf, but the stone crumbles, and its ashes nourish the very grass which it had crushed before. London, Paris, Boston, go the same way, and grasses will one day cluster round the monuments of their highest glory!

It is always in rich grassy places that the little springs and water-runnels bubble up into the light, and start off on their journey of fertility; down in the dark dell of the old wood, where the huge roots of the trees are matted all over with green and golden mosses, which sometimes hang like green beards, and dip into the pebbly waters; where the little squirrel finds a home, and the lizard and the shrew-mice burrow. There it is that, in rich circles of waving grass, the fresh sparkling waters bubble up with a gurgling sound, and go tinkling along under the shelving banks, kissing the willows, and chiming their soft songs as they jump over the clumps of timber.

The little brooks always make their pathway where the grasses grow, for the little brooks and the grasses love each other, and they creep along together plotting how to bless the world. The harebell and the purple loose-strife, the woodbine and the meadow-sweet, may each peep up here and there, and get refreshing splashes as the waters leap over the stony ledges in their way, but the grass is the streamlet's favourite, and wherever the one is, there is the other to be found. Oh, what a sweet life hath this grass of ours! his is the true Arcadian transport; the music of the rivulet, the soft bleating of the sheep, the drowsy hum of wild bees, the rich perfume of thymy knolls, and the shadowy beauties of "faerie land." These are his food and pastime, and the bonny brook that wets his feet is his chosen companion. The poets (whom we shall never refrain from quoting) have lovely allusions to the companionship of the rivulet and the grass:—

The deep recesses of the grove he gained,
Where, in a plain defended by the wood,
Crept through the matted grass a crystal flood,
By which an alabaster fountain stood.*

Drayton has a metaphor of unique richness—

The full and youthful breasts which, in their *meadowy* pride,
Are branched with rivery veines, meander-like that glide.†

Then, again, the grass is the play-ground of the dear children, when they make the sky ring with their merry shouts, and bound like fawns upon the mellow turf. Who would not bless the ground whereon the foot of childhood loves to tread, where it loves to gambol and exult in the exuberance of its happy heart? Heaven's smile lie on them! the little angel flutterers, tripping in twos and threes with their rosy faces and laughing eyes, plucking the daisies that glimmer on the sward, setting no worldly value on their gifts and gatherings, but, like the grass, fresh, fervent, and joyful, and knowing no other tears but those which vanish with the first ray of sunshine. God's blessing be with the children! and if we would have them supplant the present with a nobler race of men, we must let their hearts expand amongst the flowers, and their limbs gain strength upon the turf.

* Dryden—*Cymon and Iphigenia*.

† Poly-Olbien, s. 10.

The sweet songs of the vineyards and the bees,
 Fell lulling upon the soothed ear;
 And nightingales among the orange trees,
 Piping their gurgling notes so soft and clear,
 The old and the young came from the fields to hear:
 Some gathered flowers by the meadow side—
 Of bright and beautiful there was no dearth—
 Or picked up daisies, which they strove to hide,
 Then threw at each other, gay with mirth,
 Or planted garlands for the nymphs, who loved them from their birth.*

If the grass is so beautiful, then, and mingled with so many associations of story and song, why not have it always beside us, and pass our lives amongst its green? Why pine away in smoky towns in jarring discord, where the heart is bound round with an icy chain of conventionalities, and the soul, stripped of her beauty, is reduced to rags? Let us live beside the grass, under the blue canopy of heaven, where the morning sun may greet us with his fire, and the midnight stars rain down their benedictions of beauty. Let us have the grass for a companion, and the wild bee and butterfly for friends. Let us dwell where the cataract leaps from the rocky height, and the rainbow arch beats down the thunder; in the wide wilderness, where blossoms wave, and leafy trees sing anthems to the moon; on the bleak moor, where the black-cock sails along the heathery steeps; or by the margin of the river, where the otter plunges for his prey, and strange birds anchor themselves beside the islands green; or wherever grass grows and beautifies the earth, for where its leaves rustle is beauty and solace; where its silken plumes nod in the air, is plenty; and wherever its tender shoots pierce through the clods, there is home, there is society, there is love. Did old Spenser long for some green solitude—a “lodge in some vast wilderness,” or did he wish to dwell—

———— In a little island
 Covered with shrubby woods, in which no way
 Appeared for people in or out to pass,
 Nor any footing fynde for ouergrown grass.†

Such should have been his home, and amid the leafy garniture

* Longus—*Pastoral, The Shepherd's Spring.*

† Faerie Queen, B. vi., c. 11.

around him he could have lived his fairy dreams ; and, like that prince of old, he might have—

Loosly display'd uppon the grassie ground,
Possessed of sweete sleepe that luld him soft in swound.*

We would live so, as did the ancient keepers of the sheep, with grass upon our threshold and sunshine on our roof ; and with Shennstone we would sing—

If a friend my grass-grown threshold find,
O, how my lonely cot resounds with glee!

We might then lie—

———— On the verdant grass,
Beneath the covering trees,
To cheat the hours with short repose.†

Our life should have no harsh music, no discordant words, but, like the pipe at a Lesbian vintage, breathe a song of pleasure.

If it be well to live with the grass, then is it well to have it on our graves. It will love to grow there with the golden flowers and the creeping weeds of perfume, making holy the soft mound above us, and beautifying the place of our fragrant rest. It takes something from the sting of death, when the sufferer knows that he will sleep beneath the grass, and the warm sunshine will lie all day upon his grave, and the flowers keep watch when the stars shine. To rot in a black charnel-house, and diffuse poison and pestilence in the corrupted city, is a fearful fate for the body which has been the temple of an immortal soul ; but to be pillowed where the grass waves green, and the robin sings the song of summer, has something in it of melancholy sweetness. It must have robbed the heart of poor Ophelia of half her sorrow to know that her aged father had the grass to cover his grave :—

He is dead and gone, layde, he is dead and gone ;
At his head a grasse-greene turfe, at his heeles a stone.‡

* Faerie Queen, B. vi., c. 7.

† Orlando Furioso (Hoole), B. xxiii., v. 39.

‡ Hamlet, Folio ed., p. 273.

Alas! she was to go to the grave herself soon, and a weeping brother was to say—

———— Lay her i' the earth,
And from her fair and unpolluted flesh
May violets springe.

But leaving these things, which perhaps are trivial, let us take note how green things have mingled their voices and teachings with the life of man. Upon the grassy prairies of the olden time, the untamed races chased the deer and boar; within the umbrage of primeval woods they learnt the first lessons of a simple creed, and upon altars of green herbs offered their first sacrifice. Nature was still educating the Man, lifting up his heart to heaven by the splendours of noon and sunset, and filling him with gratitude to the Author of all Good, by the promises of fertile fields, the exuberance of fruitful jungles, and the enamelled poetry of wood and hill side.

In after times, the grassy herbage was still dear to men, and upon the green floor of the wilderness they made their orisons to the morning star, and chanted their hosannahs to the rising sun, regarding the golden orb as the visible emblem of the Eternal. The green grass was the first altar, and the brown forest with its roof of sky the first temple. The Druids walked in solemn procession over the dewy sward of the forest, when, with shouts of joy and wild songs of gladness, they assembled to commemorate the egress of the ark. Then the caves were festooned with garlands; an altar was built of grasses and vine-leaves; the crystal cups of honey were twined with clusters of wild blossoms; the trees were festooned with flowers; and cisterns, emblematical of the sun-god, were hung among the garlands. Then in the twilight recesses the priests performed the mystic dance, and as the May smile of morning broke upon the hills and fields, the hymns of the May-women were whispered in wild melodies, and the invocation to May was performed upon the green. The cattle lowed in the meadows, the birds sang in the valleys, and the sun, pillowed on the clouds of heaven, flushed the fountains and the forests with his golden fire. The multitude fell prostrate on the grass. The priests bowed to the pavilion of celestial glory; and with one accord the throngs of worshippers broke forth into a rapturous hymn of praise, pouring out the incense of their hearts in harmony with the odorous

breathing of the flowers, which floated like clouds of beauty over the grassy temples of the ancient Britons.

When man, first waking up from a rude and brutal barbarism, perceived the relations of the world without to the world within himself, he sought to embody the unshapen poetry of his rugged heart in some form of simple beauty, and he took the grass as the first representative of the exuberance of nature, and the renewing beauty of her primal glory. He made manifest his thankfulness for the fruits of the ground in offerings to the powers of nature of the green grass which made beautiful his pathway through the world, and by the seeds of which his fields were sown with plenty. The period is of immense antiquity when the inhabitants of the sacred region of the Nile began first, from the vestal hearth, to sacrifice to the celestial gods, not myrrh, cassia, nor the first fruits of things mingled with the crocus of frankincense—for afterwards, when wanting the necessities of life, those were offered with great labour and many tears, as libations to the god,—“but grass, which as a certain soft wool of a prolific nature, they plucked with their hands.” “They gathered the blades and the roots, and all the germs of this herb, and committed them to the flames, as a sacrifice to the gods, to whom they paid immortal honour through fire.”* Hence, too, the patriarchs and poets of the olden times painted Damater, the mother of the gods—the same that was Cu-bell, the chief goddess of the Chaldeans, the Cybele of the Ionians, and the Rhoia of the Doric people—as sitting amid green grass, and surrounded with fragrant flowers. On the oldest coins of Syria she sits beside the hive, with ears of corn in her hands, to denote the return of the seasons and their exuberance of fruits; while at her feet the grasses grow and wave, to typify the seasonal renewals of green beauty on the earth. So, too, the benefactors of humanity were represented as surrounded with emblems of rural beauty, and as such, Saturn, the man of piety and justice, is described with the sickle in hand, going over the earth to teach its people the tillage of its soil. It was in the season of spring grass, too, that the band of heroes under Jason set out under the guidance of the dove, which was directed by the hand of Minerva, to regain the Golden Fleece. It was at the time—

* *Porphry de Abstinencia*.—Book II., sec. 5.

When first the pleasing Pleiades appear,
 And *grass-green* meads pronounced the summer near,
 Of chiefs a valiant band, the flower of Greece,
 Had planned the emprise of the golden fleece.

But leaving the shadowy records and traditions of buried years, let us turn to the aspect of the grass itself, for it is everywhere a thing of beauty, whether gladdening the mountain solitude with its angel smile, greening the soft slopes of the mossy glades, where the red deer wanders, and the child loves to play ; whether gliding down into the deep, deep valleys, where the fountains murmur and the bees sing ; whether clothing the sharp granite on the crown of the world, and making a cushion for the only flower which there looks up to God, or clinging like an eternal friendship to the root of the gnarled trees, where in summer the rabbits burrow and the linnets sing, and in winter the storm-cloud gathers and the branches crash ; while the hurricanes, let loose from the north, go howling in a chorus, scattering the growths of ages as they sweep the march of God.

The grass is green, and we love it for its dear homely light and spring-tide beauty ; its colour gladdens the eye, and its promise cheers the heart. The poets have ever loved it, and its sheeny lustre has been the token of peace to many a weary soul. The morning star of poetry shed the lustre of its lucid beams on nothing more joyfully than the

Gras in the grene mead.

He loved it for its springing verdure, for the daisies which it cherished in its heart, the twinkling buds of summer which it gathered to its breast, and for nothing more than its blessed greenness.

Colours ne know I now, withouten drede,
 But swiche colours as growen in the mede.

CHAUCER.

And how could he refrain from loving it, for it was at the springing season of the grass that his heart first felt the pulses of a poet's love:—

Blessed be Saint Valentine,
 For on this day I chose you to be mine
 Without repenting, my hearte-sweete.

How deliciously sleeps the grass in the moonlight, and how joyfully it laughs in the radiance of the sun. There is no place which it will not beautify. It climbs up the steep mountain passes which are inaccessible to man, and forms ledges of green amid the rivings of the crags: it leaps down between steep shelving precipices, and there fastens its slender roots in the dry crevices which the earthquakes had rent long ago, and into which the water trickles when the sunbeams strike the hoary snows above. There it leaps and twines in the morning light, and flings its sweet, sweet laughing greenness to the sun; there it creeps and climbs about the mazes of the solitude, and weaves its fairy tassels with the wind. It beautifies even that spot, and spreads over the sightless visage of death and darkness the serene beauty of a summer smile, flinging its green lustre on the bold granite, and perfuming the lips of morning as she stoops from heaven to kiss the green things of the earth. It makes a moist and yielding carpet over the whole earth, on which the impetuous may pass with hurried tread, or the feet of beauty linger.

Then, too, there is the broad empire of fairy lore, of wood-sprites, and fays, and dryads—the spiritual essences of green leaves and the embodied voices of living nature. The fairies have dwelt in the green ever since time was, and the grass has ever loved them so, that wherever it was blessed with the light touch of their feet, it broke into magic rings of holy ground, sanctified to their moonlight revels. King Arthur still lives with the fairies in the grass, for they bore him off that he might never know the pangs of dying, but return again and reign as grandly as before.* It was then that the poet fathers sang their fairy songs, and the multitude, yet unchilled by science and scepticism, revered each meadow and dark dell as the especial home of fairy creatures:—

In the olde dayes of King Artour,
Of which thes Bretons spoken gret honour,
All was the land fulfilled of faerie;
The Elf-quene and hire jolie compaynie
Danced full oft in many a grene mede;
This was the old opinion as I rede.

CHAUCER.

The love of green things is so universal and indestructible a passion of man's heart, that no spot of earth where verdure grows, be it

* The Welsh bards have a myth to this effect.

ever so wild and dreary in its aspect, but wears for him the semblance of a home. Where there is a blade of grass, a living leaf, a bird, or a water-runnel edged with moss, there the good angels of his destiny seem to cluster, and there, if need be, he can lie down peacefully to rest. It is for green things the mariner pines, and for which he first looks when islands heave above the foam. It is the greenness of his native land which endears him to it, and makes home ever a sweet memory to his heart and a dear name on his lips; and when the green shores of an unknown country lift themselves above the wave, the sweet pictures of his childish haunts come back upon him, and he learns the great truth, that with greenness and natural beauty, childhood survives as long as man remains. It is just in this fulness of heart that Hakluyt, the old voyager, tells his artless tale:—"This country seemed very goodly and delightsome to all of vs, in regard of the greennesse and beauty thereof, and we judged it to be very populous within the land." *

There is a moral beauty about green things which renders them mute teachers of the noblest lessons. Dear to man are they as things which solace him and beguile life of its harshness; which surround his home with poetry, and fill his heart with peace. How dreary would be the lot of man in a world where green things were not; with no green valleys dotted with homely sheep, no broad savannas rustling a million golden tassels in the wind; no flowery meadows folding us in their grassy arms; and no magic chain of love-like songs and bleatings, and tender associations, and soft stirrings of the heart, filling the soul with joy upon joy, till life itself becomes but as an hour of sunshine.

There is a moral beauty and a teaching for the spirit in all the budding things of the green out-door world, which to the wise man afford inward satisfaction, and never fail to renew his hope. Their very frailness and evanescence hint of our short stay here, as their renewed growth with each return of spring symbolises the spring season to which we shall awake in another world. The story of the fig-tree but emblems the condition of man: if he be without fruit he shall be accursed; if he do naught for the service of men, he shall be a leprosy of barrenness, and fall under the doom of the fig-tree which the Lord condemned.

He gafe ensample in his parsonne,
 And we the wordes have alone,
 Like to the tre with leves greene
 Upon the which no fruit is seene.

GOWER.

Let him, while his outward deeds are fair and goodly to behold, cherish also the inward sympathies and high thoughts which tend to fruitfulness in the future; and he shall then become as a tree whose harvests are equal to its spring promises; and the fruition of his heart shall endear him to his age and generation. "The greene leaves outward sheweth that the tree is not drie inwarde; and the good woorkes oftenlie notifieth the inwarde heart secretlie." *

Over the field where human blood has flowed, and thousands have fallen in the fight for freedom, the grass waves as greenly as before; and where the martyrs sleep, it grows in rich luxuriance, to hide their blanched bones from the gazing of the world. They who sleep—

Deep beneath the grass-grown soil,
 Far in the common field,

will awake no more to the sunshine of this world, but meet the reward of the justice or injustice of their fight beyond the grassy shores of this. And so the world revolves; and the spot whereon armies have assembled, where emperors have achieved territory and martial glory, where crowns have been lost and won, and thousands have sunk down unknelled to rise no more, the grass comes again with its refreshing verdure, gladdening the husbandman with its assurances of plenty, cheering the heart by its spring light and whisperings of love, and surrounding the life of man with perfumed benedictions. These are the teachings of the grass, these the lessons of its verdurous beauty. It is alike the symbol of exuberance and the teacher of fate. In the wilderness it welcomes man to pitch his tent and become a peaceful sojourner; and, amid the ruins, it mocks him for his work: the city which he rears sinks into the dust, and—

Desolation o'er the grass-grown street
 Expands her raven wings, and from the gate
 Where senates once the weal of nations plann'd
 Hisseth the slimy snake, through hoary weeds,
 That clasp the mouldering column.†

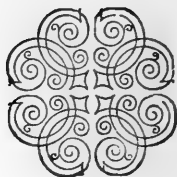
* Golden Boke, Letter 7.

† Akenside—*Pleasures of Imagination*, B. ii.

But from that ruin shall other cities arise, and a nobler race of frank-browed men shall pass in the streets, and maidens fair walk on the green lawns to welcome in the morns of spring. There shall be flowery islands in the future, and the summer's-shine shall fall on meadows green, on which the children of the future men shall play. The young birds shall carol from their leafy homes, as if the trees sang forth themselves, and the new generation shall have the dreams of the present all fulfilled.

Heart! be thou like the grass; welcome man and woman with thy smile: be thou green in winter as in summer; assort thyself with brown bees, and homely things that bless the world, keeping thy blossom by thee to gild the pathway of the future. Thy days are as few as the grass; as the grass that groweth to-day, and to-morrow is cast into the oven. "For euen as the flower of the grasse shall he vanysh awaye. The sunne ryseh wyth heete, and the grasse widereth, and his flower falleth away, and the beautie of the fashion of it perisheth."* Heart! be thou like the grass—fragrant, fair, gentle, and fertile in good works; for which God be thanked, for its beauties are beyond description, and its uses beyond enumeration.

* Bible, 1551.



THE SEASON OF BUTTERCUPS.

ALL is silence—silence deep ;
Hark ! what chanting faint and low !
Leaves and flowers awake from sleep,
Murmurs from the blossoms flow.

HERR FREILIGRATH.

NOT alone is the spring-time the genesis of life ; it is also the genesis of joy,—the soul's season of promise. Nature and Man come back again to childhood ; childhood itself has lighter laughter ; infancy a fresher heart. Spring ! oh, dear spring, with thy tender voice and holy tears, how do men bless thee for thy gifts of love ! greener moss, greener grass, blinking sunshine, softer air, daffodils, buttercups,—

As if the rainbows of the fresh, mild spring
Had blossomed where they fell.

Buttercups, the freshest and the welcomest of all. Buttercups ! splashes from the wheels of the chariot of the sun, that haunt every meadow, and roadside, and sunny bank, and, with the white daisies make the gold and silver of the fields,—a gold and silver more precious than the dirt men dig from mines, because appealing to their highest faculties, mingling in the play of their sentiments, and while glittering before the eye, filling the heart with the noblest emotions.

Hail, beautiful Season of Buttercups ! thrice beautiful in thy timid gentleness, thy confiding innocence, and thy fulness of rich promise ! Welcome, fragrant season of slanting sunbeams, fresh birthtime of yellow flowers ! When the dear children go with hearts full of spring-time, and hopes yet in the unfolding bud,—searching for the snow-flakes and the spangles, the daisies and the buttercups, which they think Heaven has let fall as manna ; then, wearied with prattle, to loiter home, in twos and threes, laden with their flowery spoils, to lie and dream all night of worlds made of flowers, and people with yellow faces and white daisy eyes, and yellow hair, walking upon yellow ground, on which there is not room to tread without crushing the buttercups.

Welcome, bright birthday of flowers and song ! soft season of verdurous freshness, bringing back the growth and glory of the world, and filling manhood's heart with dreams of boyhood, and the fairy pictures of the past ! Welcome, Season of Buttercups, and soft gales that kiss the cheek with coolness ! When the honeysuckle peeps in for the first time at the open window ; when we venture out once more with heads uncovered, and watch the sparrows as they flutter round the ivy ; and, forgetting hawks and cats, imagine their life a more joyous one than our own ; when the hills come nearer to us with their fresh green flanks, and the wild wood warbles with a full heart's song ; when the bare branches wake from the night of winter to the morning of spring, to peep at the buttercups and blades of light green grass that cluster round their knees ; and then watching the amber bars of the east, as the old sun climbs the slopes of Heaven, so wink and blink in the glare of the sunlight, that tears start from their eyes, and form thousands of yellow drops which take root on every spray and twig, and form their summer coat of leaves. Beautiful, fresh season ! sanctified at thy shrine of flowers by all the little birds that woo and wed in the brown branches, by all the new buds which break into emerald greenness ; by all the dreamy bees which sail singing after luscious honey ; by all the milch kine that breathe a " smell of dairy," and wallow, knee deep, in the new grass ; and by every milkmaid whose cheek blushes with the rose of health, whose breath is ever like the meadowy breeze of June, and who " makes her hand hard with labour, and her cheek soft with pity."

Spring is the Season of Buttercups ; it is the season also of bursting buds and germinating seeds. First, we have troops of snow-drops and flame-like crocuses, varied here and there with the bright yellow of the winter aconite, and crowned with the iron leaves of the butcher's broom. Then come the pale primroses " that die unmarried," sprinkling the hedges with sulphur ; violets with breath as sweet as from an angel's mouth :—

As if Nature's incense-pans had spilt,
And shed the dews i' the air.

Coltsfoot, the emblem of maternal care ; the rare whitlow grass, both white and yellow, so small that they seem like legacies from the fairies, who perished when Faith fled from the people : white wood anemone, the spirit of the spring breezes ; the pilewort, and the

celandine that Wordsworth loved. On the hedges blue speedwells peep up in cloudy clusters; the chickweed and the cuckoo flower show their silver petals; the daisies sprinkle the sward with millions of white starry eyes; and the buttercups wreath and twine over the green mounds, the forest dimples, the grey stones, and the graves of a former summer's beauty. And amid them all—

The silver streams go singing in fine lines,—

splashing, trickling, washing banks of moss where harebells, yet unfolded, cluster; creeping through reedy banks, where the water fowl learn maternal joys; past grassy meadows that swell with fatness, and beneath broad, arching boughs, where a thousand wild birds congregate amid the leafy darkness:—

The Winter with his grisly storms no longer durst abide,
 The pleasant grass with lusty green the earth hath newly dyed;
 The trees have leaves, the boughs do spread, new changed is the year,
 The water-brooks are clean sunk down, the pleasant boughs appear;
 The Spring is come, the goodly nymphs now dance in every place;—
 Thus hath the year most pleasantly of lately changed her face.

EARL SURREY.

More glorious still when the gardens heap up their crimson foam, and apple orchards brim over with blossoms; when the green corn appears above the furrows, playing with every wind that skips over the field, and clustering in thick patches round the skylark's nest, where the brooding mother crouches, listening to her gallant as he dashes upwards to the sun, singing in the blue his roundelay.

In the hedges nestle all manner of wild herbs and creatures, while along the banks, the hawthorns stretch, like boundary-walls, for miles and miles, making the air so full of fragrance that we seem wafted to some old region of enchantment, amid the scenery of the "Fairy Queen," or within reach of the "sleep soothing groves" of the "Castle of Indolence." Good old friend! flinging its perfume over the sheep-fields, waving its boughs over the thatched roof, and suggesting to the wayfarer the merry days of Robin Hood, when the good folks went before daybreak to the woods,—

To gather May-baskets and smelling brere,

* * * * *

With hawthorn buds and sweet eglantine,

And girlonds of roses, and soppes in wine.

The Season of Buttercups is also the season of the sweet birds' song. It is the heyday of Nature, in which the blood trips more freshly through the veins of every creature, and love stoops down once more to possess all things with his warmth and vigour. How could the little birds woo and wed at any other time? How, except at the Season of Buttercups? when the world is surfeited with beauty, when

Each leaf upon the trees doth shake with joy,
With joy the white clouds navigate the blue,
And on his painted wings, the butterfly,
Most splendid masker in this carnival,
Floats through the air in joy.

ALEXANDER SMITH.

How, but at that awakening season, when

The clodded earth goes up in sweet breathed flowers ;
In music dies poor human speech,
And into beauty blow these hearts of ours,
When Love is born in each.

IDEM.

It is this passion, dawning in the Season of Buttercups, which gives new life to the heart of the most timid creature; works a change in the attitude and habit of the most courageous and the most retiring; gives the quadruped his noblest bearing, and the bird his brightest plumage; makes the creature, which before was startled at the falling of a leaf, or the dancing of its own shadow, energetic, affectionate, and fearless; brings out the highest capabilities of the meanest and most despised, and makes even a sparrow musical. There is the bonny lark,—dweller on the brown earth, companion of the daisy, a little tawny bird, shy, and crouching in the dust,—Love lifts him up into the blue heaven to beat his wings against the morning star, and drown the voices of angels with his torrent of song:—

Seeming to rain down music from his wings,
And bathe his plumage in a fount of light.

It carries him on the wings of a wild passion away into

————— the abysses dim
Of lonest space, in whose deeps regally
Suns and their bright broods swim ;

and makes him the companion of the sunshine and the amber cloud,

all the while warbling to his bride as she sits brooding and listening under the shelter of the bents.

How fares it with a hundred others ? Mute all the year till now, Love seizes them, and they become spirits of gay song, so full, free, and concordant, that the forest is no longer a mere fleet of brown stems, but " an orchestra of mighty sound."

In the very dawn of spring comes the wryneck, with its cry of " pee," softer and fuller now, because uttered from the heart, telling of the hours, when—

The balm, the beauty, and the bloom
Recall the good Creator to his creature.

Then, simultaneously, the chaffinch, who had begun to sing long before, attains the fulness and fluency of his cheerful song; the thrush, who whistled when the snow lay thick, is hurried with the rest, and has so much to express that he is constrained to sing by night as well as by day; the blackcap, with uncontrollable delight, mocks all the songs it hears, as if employing all the languages of the bird-world to express what language never can express at all; and from the midst of this " full-throated chorus," rise the soft modulations of the nightingale, first, " jug jug," then in a liquid strain of flute-like music which melts us into tears, as if it were the voice of a happy spirit, singing songs of gladness in the gardens of Paradise. It " breathes," says old Izaak Walton, " such sweet, loud music out of its little instrumental throat, that it might make mankind think that miracles had not ceased. He that at midnight, when the very labourer sleeps securely, should hear, as I have often, the clear airs, the sweet descant, the natural rising and falling, the doubling and redoubling of that sweet voice, might well be lifted above the earth, and say, ' Lord, what music hast thou provided for the saints in heaven, when thou affordest bad men such music upon earth? ' " No wonder the old poets wove it into their wild fables, and made it the emblem of tenderness, affection, and slighted worth. No wonder that Hesiod sang of the " dappled Philomel," Homer of the " tawny Nightingale," Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides—himself the nightingale of Grecian poetry, drawing his inspirations from the beautiful in Nature—Theocritus, dreamy and musical as a summer sleep—Longus, spiritual and tender, like the flowers in the gardens of Philetas;—all that have known how to love and sing, from the

mountain bard, charming the shepherds with impromptu songs, to Milton, singing of—

—— the pleasant time,
The cool, the silent, save where silence yields
To the night-warbling bird, that now, awake,
Tunes sweetest his love-laboured song.

And not those only that sing deserve honourable mention, but many others, whose throats have no ravishing harmonies, are yet susceptible of the rose-hues and summer breath of that blind god who tips his arrow with an amra bloom to make its point pierce keener. There is the little wagtail—dear to the Season of Buttercups—a consequential, striding wiseacre, for ever foraging by the unfrozen spring for delicate morsels of insect life ; a thorough Briton, nevertheless, who sticks to the land that gave him birth, and disdains to turn his back on our northern climate, because a few fogs and frosts give edge to the British winter. There are the rooks, too, a clamorous, croaking, sable-plumed race of petty swindlers, spending half the spring in stealing each other's sticks, and fighting no end of battles in the thick of the branches, until that universal conqueror—the god of the Season of Buttercups—has them in his grasp, and then they build nests, and prattle of love, and hatch large broods of baby rooks—destined, like their parents, to be alternately devils and doves—the very models of parental care and social union. Besides these, there are the wood-pigeons, which now gather back to their old mossy haunts, cowering together in the leafiest of coverts, besides the loveliest of grey old nooks, where little runnels flow unseen, and little seeds burst into yellow sprays, under the matting of the last year's leaves, to spring up into waving heads of greenness, and sit in the shadow of the oaks, beguiled by the soft, heart-touching “ coo, coo,” which tells of love amid the branches. April bringing up the rear of spring visitants, gives us quails, turtle-doves, swifts, puffins, swallows, martins, and lapwings ; and life in innumerable forms assumes its noblest aspect, warmed into new vigour with the expansion of the season, enhanced in its beauty by the development of increased provision for its support, and lifted half-way into the region of the unreal by that divine impulse which is the soul of living Nature, and which, while it adds heroic attributes alike to man and brute, conserves that succession of creatures to which all the provisions of Nature are attached as to one continuous thread.

Poets, painters, and gossipers, have all dealt with spring as a season of beauty only, as a time of renewal and regeneration ; forgetting that it is the season also of strife and terror, alternating between sunshine and storm, and, in some climates, the most to be dreaded for its ravages of wind and wave. The vernal equinox is not more strikingly marked here in its bright hues, its bursting of leaf-bud and flower-bud, its softness of sunshine, and its gush of song, than it is in other climes by its sweeping hurricanes, its sand-storms, and ice-storms, its crash of forests, and fall of avalanches—for it is everywhere the season of rapid change, and the summer of fruitage which follows it is but the ripening of the influence, which, in its birth, has so many startling features. The spring of the world has its analogies in the spring of time ; for in the ages the seasons are repeated, and from the beginning to the end of creation, times, and seasons, and things, are counterparts of each other. Geology, astronomy, history,—each have their spring-time,—their Season of Buttercups. Far back into the twilight of tradition, spring shows its mask of beauty, and its phase of many-coloured strife. The mountain-heights that crown the world were the growths of former springs of forces, as buttercups are now the growths of fair springs of sunshine. Entombed within the rocky ramparts are the ferns and flowers of that old season of renewal, and beside those very plants are the indelible traces of up-heaving forces, writhings, fusings, and contortions, by which the giant masses were blasted and flung about the world,—played with, as the March hurricane now plays with the stray feather of a bird, or as the ocean, whirled in the equinox, plays with the froth that forms the crests of its waves. Spring in the world and spring in man are only different sides of the same fact. Infancy opens into youth, like the unfolding of a flower. All is promise ; the blossom of life breaks upon the ruddy cheek ; the freshness of spring-life is there ; the laughing lip and the daisy light of boyhood's eye proclaim how lovely is the stormless spring. But the equinox of life comes on, and fierce passions rage ; March hurricanes ride upon the breath ; March madness usurps the will ; the heart becomes a region of storm and tempest ; and sometimes the spring folly withers the blossom which should light up manhood's summer.

It has its use, this spring of beauty in Nature, this spring of passion in Man. As the winds try the branches, and the frosts try the buds, sweeping away those that are not worthy to bear fruit, so the

passions of Man serve as tests of the good that is in him. When they lead not to licentiousness, they impart a virtuous fire, which impels him to noble deeds, and upon the shoulders of impetuous youth, Love is borne in triumph to a home of virtue. Bless thee, bright season of greenness, birth-time of out-door joys, harbinger of plenty, genesis of love ; fresh, fragrant, and fertile season of Buttercups !



THE SEASON OF BROWN LEAVES.

Race after race of leaves and men,
 Bloom, wither, and are gone.
 As winds and waters rise and fall,
 So life and death roll on.
 And ever as the ocean heaves
 So life and death roll on;
 Drop, drop into thy grave, old leaf,
 Drop, drop into thy grave.

ELLIOTT.

THE spring time came with green and gladness, and the summer followed with its rosy flowers and fruits: and now, after so brief a season of exuberance, the green things fade and die, and the joy of the year withers with the browning of the leaf. For a few moments, ere the branches are stripped of all their russet glories, let us reflect on these autumn changes as they hint of analogies in life and nature, and suggest ideas of hope and duty.

That view of the world which represents the outward and material forms, as perishable symbols of imperishable ideas, is that which should guide our first steps into this region of comparison and speculation. Nature is a series of progressions or unfoldings, and all her creatures are representative of ideas. The human form sinks into decay and perishes; the individuals pass from existence one by one; they do not live as individual types, but collectively as representatives of Man. So the year, with its manifold changes and unfoldings, its many forms and colours and voices, has its spiritual and moral analogies, which are infinitely more poetical and instructive than any of its details of animate or inanimate beauty. All through the universe the same few laws peep out under an unity of expression which makes them all parallel. Spring, summer, autumn, winter: Infancy, youth, manhood, age. The seasonal unfoldings of the individual; the spring, summer, autumn, and winter changes of the man are seen again in the progress of the race, and the ages of gold, silver, bronze, and iron are but other modes of expressing the same fact. The tree of life has its budding and blossoming, its fruitage

and decay, and one simple thread of related harmony runs through all its metamorphoses.

The leaves that brown now, and fill the forest paths with pliant matting, from which, as we tread the solitude, a moist odour arises, were in their day rife with life and luxuriance, and having accomplished their work, go back to the soil whence they sprang to supply the nourishment of another generation. All things change together as the autumn air creeps over the fields. The sun sinks slanting to an early bed; and the day, like the human heart after the shadows of many years have gathered upon it, is less merry than of yore. The golden corn becomes a grey stubble, the green tree a naked brush of branches, and death comes up from the grave to breathe a freezing air upon the world, and to usher in the days of silence. Yet these leaves, which flutter into autumn graves; this grey stubble, which stands where waved the green before, are the harbingers of spring-life yet to come, and the types of an unceasing series of renewals which eternity may develope but cannot exhaust. Man gathers the harvests, and survives many generations of falling leaves; and the very wind that beats the trees in their waning life, is to him as a breath from that blooming summer beyond, in which the growths of these years shall still strive for completion. He looks complacently on this flowing of the ages, and as these shadows of destruction weave around him, he sees the rainbow of hope spanning the dark gulf between the summer here and the summer there, and borrows from the joy of this the glory of his future years. What is this, then, but the law of progress, of development for ever of those possibilities which are locked up within the soul of man, and which the changes of the seasons teach and the cycles of the ages help to perfect? Let it once be known that the soul of man is capable of never-ending youth, and this browning of the leaf is a lesson of hope rather than fear; and the story of *Æon* is seen to be repeated for ever and ever. When the spring of the world was here, and the creatures were creeping up to higher forms by the same law of development, the grey mosses, sown on barren rocks by singing winds, crept up and down the sea-beat solitudes, and there was no man to watch their growth, no man to appreciate their beauty. The grasses came and waved their silken tassels, and the forests followed with their great brown arms and leafy fingers, and when the turf rippled into waves of green and gold, the master of the wild appeared,

breaking the silence of the desert, and singing the story of the world. The civilization which now puts out its buds and shoots of moral beauty is but a part of the same series of unfoldings which in the primal age covered the granite with greenness, and now begets the consciousness that man, like the world on which he lives, is made to grow—to grow.

In this partial life, in which shreds and patches of existence get mistaken for the full completion of being, the browning of the leaf is fraught with sadness, and the death which follows seems a thing of gloom. Yet in nature, death is as beautiful as life, as needful, and for that reason as good. The decaying leaves form odorous mounds from which, in the spring, new generations of things beautiful will burst, and without which no troops of flowers would arise to sweeten the breath of another summer. The dead bird, the dead insect, are each fitted to form the nourishment for other forms of life, and fill a place in the world which they could not occupy when living. From out of all this death and destruction, nature weaves the warp and woof of future fabrications, and new races spring, phoenix-like, from the ashes of those which have expired. Why then fill the house with mourning and the eyes with tears when Death shows his presence in the home? Is *he* not also one of God's ministering angels, sent to bless rather than to ban, and like other ministrants, filling a place in a series of changes which shall never end? Look at the tree, it stands upright in the sun, and confronts heaven as if worthy of the light which drops down from the blue, while man creeps into towns and hides his head from the daylight, too conscious as he is, that the tree shames him. The tree has filled its place, has developed all its energies to their full possibility; while in man the will has usurped the instinct, and the faculties remain unfolded. Therefore the tree fears not death, while man weeps before the falling of the leaf, and surrounds the death of his kindred with emblems of contrition and sorrow. But in nature man is no better than the tree, and the individual, of whatever tribe, is of no value but as a fragment of the type on which the race is built. Hence the tree has all the elements of growth within and around it, and as it has no will to draw it aside, it grows up to the limit of these possibilities. When, as a member of its race its work is done, it falls, rots, and becomes the food of successive plants and creatures, and there is no weeping in the wood, no weeds of sorrow in the solitude.

Thus, in reality, there is no death, and that which we regard as the cessation of existence, and which the browning of the leaf teaches us with shame and weeping, is only one of many changes, through which all the types must pass as they fulfil the universal law which requires them to grow, to grow. And because man has all the faculties of all the creatures combined, together with a will which allows of no limit to its choice, a mind which knows no limit to its power, death is still less a truth to him, who can transmit the faculties of the inward as well as the outward life, and perpetuate, even in dying, the chain of circumstances through which he has already passed. This civilizing, railroad-building, freedom-loving race of beautiful souls, are only the fruits which hang on the branches of the tree of human history, and which, in their turn, become the food of generations which are to follow them. Each man lives to enjoy that which past ages of suffering and trial have procured for him, and suffers in his turn that the next may derive happiness from his scars and trials. Thus all the aims of all the ages are locked in this, and each individual man carries within him the germs of an infinite progression.

But this will which wars with instinct, which draws him from the wood where he had learnt to worship, and thrusts him into the city where he may learn to swear, is also a thing of nature, a part of the being which claims its possession ; and if now acting in opposition to his aboriginal impulses, and impelling him to deeds which his moments of high sanity—when instinct alone speaks—proclaim false to his nature as a whole, acts thus only that it may one day harmonise with his whole life and become the helpmate of his highest gifts and powers. In the child, where instinct acts almost alone, the aims are pure, and there is no food for contrition ; in the man, where the will is paramount, and the instinct but a secondary trait, the soul is covered with blots, and embittered with infinite compunctions. Therefore, for the soul which dwells within this clay, the ages have all passed as successive generations of leaves, the browning and falling of which, were necessary to the perfection of the type running through and surviving them ; and for the purposes of this day and hour, the brown leaves of the human life, the perishing purposes of the human spirit, exist but as materials for that future juvenescence, when the will and the intellect shall act together.

The history of man, no less than the history of nature, teaches this lesson of evolution. Wrapped up in the oval bud of spring are the

blossoms and fruits of the summer ; and in the impulsive heart, beating in harmony with the instinctive nature of the primeval man, are enfolded the acts of his illimitable successors. The shepherd-life, with its simplicity and peace, is seen again in the radiant face of the infant, and the violet tenderness of the spring. The age of chivalry, with its costly pomp, its clang and clash of arms, its great deeds of daring and sacrifice, break out in the hours of individual passion when manhood has not yet set its seal on the brow, and when the outward semblance of heroism is mistaken for the supporting and sustaining ardour which springs from manly determinations. The first flush of summer has it, too, when the fruits are yet unripe, and storms dash in and out between the leaf-laden branches. But the autumn and the browning leaf must come, and it is already here around us. Who then is worthy to die, worthy as the leaves are, all of whose duties have been fulfilled ? Who is worthy to convert body and soul into a soil for the growth of the next generation of men, whose bodies are to be formed out of the elements of ours—whose spirits are to be fed with the aims, and hopes, and knowledge we have nurtured, and which we must bequeath to them by an inevitable necessity ?

There's not one atom of yon earth but once was living man,
Nor the minutest drop that hangeth in its thinnest cloud,
But flowed in human veins.

QUEEN MAB.

Who among us has been living all these years in vain, watching the greening and the browning of the leaves, without taking heed that his autumn must come, and that winter must heap snow on his tomb, as upon the graves of fallen leaflets ? The listless heart, the idle brain, the lips that have breathed curses, are to live for ever ; and the curses, and the evil passions, and the cherished hate, are to live also and to grow as all things grow through generation after generation. My child there has my face, my passion, my hope, my moral turpitude. Shall I not blush, then, that long ago I did not root out my sins and failings, and supplant them with a nobler growth of hopes and aspirations, that these only might break out in him, and that for his sake the browning of the leaf might find me worthy of the blessed hand of death ? For truly the destruction of things is only a necessary step in this endless growth on growth, and Death is himself the most potent of creators.

If there were no browning of the leaf, how lost to hope and heart would be the fate of man! If the bud, once unfolded, had an individual life for ever, how localized, cramped, dwarfed, were those energies which now climb higher and higher on this ladder of created souls, to reach heaven at last by that upward growth which death entails as a beautiful necessity! If the primal earth, with its unformed soil, its dreary swamps, and creatures in the first stage of development still revolved in sunlight and darkness, how aimless, hopeless, and stagnant, were the frame of Nature! Yet, the moment that succession supplants this stationary life, every pulse of the world, every change of the seasons, becomes an item in the universal progress, and Nature stands in the presence of the Deity as a being endowed with hopes and aspirations which, throughout eternity, shall be ever developing, and at every phase claiming kindred with the Divine. What to man this death, but a pledge of his eternal endurance, and a warning of the duties of the "eternal Now." As the ages have passed through phases, to higher and higher growths, so shall the individual, so shall the social circle, so shall the nation and the race. Every age and every man has lived to represent a thought, and the universal man is embodied in the growth of all the individuals through all the ages of their life-time. It is but the browning of the leaf. When Nature has attained perfection in one type, she will not tolerate less perfection in another, but raises each creature, step by step, into new perfections; and as forests fall that more stately forests may flourish upon their decay, so the conditions of humanity pass and change, that others more noble may be raised above them, and so on for ever. Greece built her temples upon the ashes of Persian and Egyptian magnificence, Rome caught up and diffused the fire which had burned upon the altars in the fanes of Greece, and Europe has risen with its civilization, its poetry, its moral grandeur, upon the ruins of the nations of the past. Where blood flowed, and thrones crumbled to dust, the green grass waves, and the man of science learns, from its flexile sprays, the dependence of man and nature upon God, and the necessity of both to grow, to grow. It is only the browning of the leaf, Autumn decay, and Spring revival; the perishing of one tribe for the prosperity of the next; the transmission of the same sap, blood, body, and soul, through endless tribes of creatures, of which man is one, growing and growing through these multiform developments to a perfection which shall never cease.

MEMORIES OF MISCHIEF.

O, the happy days of youth
Are fast gaun by.

GILFILLAN.

HE must be either a very bad or very wretched man who does not look back with fond pleasure to the days of his boyhood—"the days when hope and life were young"—and bring back from that garden of green memories some fruits so refreshing that now and then a tear shall fall on them like a joy-token, which the heart is willing to drop as the price of its new gladness. Boyhood! Ah, how racy is the very word—how suggestive of impulsive generosity—of hearty abandonment—of wild, hilarious joy—so brimful and excessive, that it scruples at no mischief so its mood be served, and will dare anything to gratify its individuality. How unlike girlhood, too—how contrasted with the quiet refinement which marks the woman even in the bud. Noise, confusion, nonsense, and unbounded laughter, with an innate love of mischief, which no philosophy can account for, form the elementary traits of boy-life: but the girl steals away to her beads, her doll, and her skipping rope—dreading to be thought a "romp," and looking suspiciously on any manifestations of boisterousness in any of her fellows.

Boys are boys, and not little men. They are all alike except as to the colour of the hair and pinafore. They all inherit the same pride, the same "devil-may-care" ambition, the same spirit of mischief, and the same freemasonry of mutual confidence in all affairs relating to the government of the boy-world. Where is the boy who is willing to be outdone by a playmate? Where is the boy who will acknowledge to being beaten in a fight with one of another school? Wherever such an one is to be found, guard him well, for fear he should grow up silly. It is positively astonishing what hair-breadth ventures boys will engage in merely to gratify some pride of rivalry, or satisfy the eternal longing of a boy "to do something." In fact, there is nothing within the range of possibility which a boy

will not do, let the consequence be what it may, provided there is no unmistakeable criminality; and then you learn what an honest nature lurks beneath that Puck's grinning countenance, resting on its own self-trust, and to be neither bought nor sold.

With what pleasure did we prepare our little sailing-boats, and our pack-thread fishing-tackle, dreaming all the while of Robinson Crusoe and the desolate island, and entertaining, much to our parents' sorrow, serious thoughts of "going to sea"—a threat that every boy indulges in when he has read that most seductive of books, and gained sufficient knowledge of navigation to send his sailing-boat safely across a river. There was one out-door sport of ours for which we can never forgive ourself—it was so thoroughly mischievous—and that was, throwing a bench-ball at the church clock, a feat which we then considered as of the first order, so much strength of arm and skill in aiming did it require. Whenever we now make a sojourn to our native suburban district of Stepney (it was a green village with meadows and windmills when we were young), we look up sorrowfully at the clock of the old church, and regret that we could ever have committed such a sacrilege as to join in a party to pelt it.

But the crowning joys of all were "buttercupping" and "black-berrying." As soon as the spring warmth brought forth the golden dandelions, and gave a new greenness to the grass in Stepney churchyard, away we went, inspired by the sunshine and rich greenness everywhere, in parties of six or eight, to gather buttercups and daisies in Bow-common fields. Alas! that spot is now a busy town, covered with houses, factories, and railway stations. It was then divided by hedgerows and gravel paths, and stile after stile led the way from "Cut-throat-Lane" to "Old Ford" and "Twigg Folly." There we rolled and gambolled in the meadows, and sometimes lay on our backs and shaded our eyes with our hands while we watched the lark in his ascending flight far into the blue, and almost melted into the embracing spring air under the influence of his joyous carol. There our arms were filled with the long stems of the buttercups; or we sat on the grass eating "cock-sorrel" to satiety, and got home at dusk so tired with happiness that sleep was a real relief. Orchard-robbing we never indulged in but once, for the good reason that "*our* village" had few orchards. We remember old "Captain King," as he was called, who kept a house and garden at the corner of "Ben Jonson's Fields." He was a retired sea captain, and spent his whole time in the

culture of his garden. As we passed his garden-wall every day to and from school, we were always attracted by a large pear-tree which loomed above the wall, and which in autumn, was always loaded with large baking-pears. On the occasion of our expedition we had formed a conspiracy to attack this pear-tree; and although the pears were yet far from ripe, and hence as hard as bullets, the enterprise was considered one of the finest we had ever engaged in; for, to tell the truth, our pride had been wounded by the boastings of a country lad who came into our class, and whose whole conversation consisted of recitals of former orchard robbings. We planned to play at "Nickey Night strike a light" in the adjoining field at dusk; and while one party kept up the noise of the game to lull suspicion, a small detachment was to scale the wall and secure the booty. The evening came, and at last the hour. Ourselves and a dark determined boy were chosen to scale the wall—three others, who had promised to aid us, having lost their courage and bolted. Choosing a spot where the bricks were loose, we at last gained the top of the wall, and looked down in the moonlight on the old gentleman's garden. We paused a moment, and then down we both dropped. We stole along the garden, treading on strawberry-beds and breaking the flower-laden branches of the rose-bushes. There were grapes in one place, nectarines in another; the walls all round were hung with unripe fruit, and presented stronger temptations than the chosen pear-tree. We were treading in the thick of a strawberry-bed, in order to get at some green peaches, when there was a noise at the garden door, and we saw the servant busy scouring a tub. By this time several of our playmates had mounted the wall, and were occupying themselves in bawling out directions and exhortations to us, thereby increasing our danger of detection. The noise of our companions attracted her attention, and she understood in a moment the meaning of their exhortations. She ran towards us: we dropt our fruit and ran also, but knew not whither. The dark boy made for a buttress of the wall and began to ascend; we shot straight across a bed of celery, tripped over a frame, and fell sprawling, and the next moment the broom was belabouring our shoulders. Our companion escaped and regained his fellows, but we were dragged like poachers to the county justice—into the presence of the grey-headed captain, who sat, in his velvet cap and slippers, smoking in the parlour. The old man looked at us through his spectacles, read us a lecture on the wickedness of theft, and then

ordered our liberation. It was a loud "pit pat" my heart made against my waistcoat, when, shy, pale, and trembling from head to foot, I sought my companions, and found they had taken the alarm and decamped, leaving me to my fate with the injured captain.

But the supreme joy was blackberrying. Long before August had tipped the trees with red,—before indeed there was a single gauze frill unfolded on the bramble, we began to arrange our blackberry-parties. Topographical debates took place every day, much to the detriment of school studies. Very soon the whole school was absorbed in warm discussion on the relative merits of Hornsey, Finchley, Wanstead, Epping, and Woodford, as suitable places of resort for blackberry gathering. At last September came, and the first jaunt took place. We took our dinners with us in our bags, though many went without dinners, as they did without parental permission; and sometimes a whole class "played the wag," and started direct for the forest instead of going to school. Many canings and boxings of ears followed these expeditions. Many a red mark on hands or face betrayed how this or that boy had become a martyr to his love for blackberries,—though his pride never suffered him to acknowledge it. Lips bore their black stains for days afterwards; scars and thorn-marks were to be seen; and the unusual oscillation of hands from mouth to pocket and from pocket to mouth told plainly enough of the store of blackberries which had been brought under cover to the school, and which, half-cooked in the trowsers pocket, were eaten with indescribable relish.

One striking trait of boys is their extraordinary appetite. Did you ever know a boy who had had enough to eat? Fill him tight as a blown bladder at the dinner table, and he will go to school with his pockets filled with grey peas, or sweetmeats, or cocoa-nut. We can vividly remember how, when we were "flush" with money, we ate no end of luxuries; but when the money had dwindled down to a last halfpenny, we contented ourselves with a halfpenny carrot, which was gnawed by a dozen different boys, until it came back to its owner a wretched remnant of its former edibility. There is scarcely anything that boys will not eat; their test of the worth of a thing is, "can it be eaten?" We always made it a point to get home soon at dinner-time on washing day, in order to fill the ashpit of the copper fire with potatoes and onions for roasting, the cooking of which occupied our whole thought during the afternoon, and kept us in an excited state

until school broke up, and we returned home to batten on our luxuries. Then there were the roast apples, which, like joints, were suspended by a string from the stalk, and swung from the brass crane to hiss and spurt before the heat. That they were taken up half done and the mouth burnt by eating them too hot, were conditions as essential to such a treat as the apples themselves. Spanish liquorice-water, and orange-peel-water, were each luxuries in their way, though we soon came to regard them as treats more adapted for girls or very young boys—certainly not for such as called each other “fellows.” The putting of milk into bottles, and churning it into butter, was an amusement which we never tired of, though many a scolding for stealing the milk, and many a threat to “take away that nasty bottle,” made us wary how we were detected in that class of experiments. We were very young indeed when we made coffee “on the sly” in a table-spoon; but we never entirely got rid of one dream, which was that of having nothing but toasted currant-buns for breakfast—a fancy which haunts us even now occasionally, and which, strange to say, we have never realized.

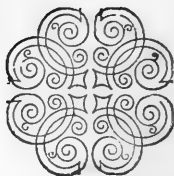
Pocket-money was always an important matter. The boy who could afford to buy a whole cocoa-nut—and a Jew always stood near the school to tantalize us with a bag-full, while he held several open ones in his hands, and offered “’arf a nut for twopence; a ’ole un for fourpence,”—a boy who could do that was accounted very rich, and was looked at many times in the course of a morning’s conning; the younger lads especially eyeing him as if to ascertain whether he exhibited any unusual traits in his features. The amount of money which a boy had very much determined his rank in the world. The more money he had, the older he was regarded, and hence the better entitled to smoke pieces of cane, or even to chew tobacco if he thought proper. If either of these operations made him sick, not a word was said about it; but if a poor boy, or one who seldom spent money, ventured on so bold a step, he became a target for ridicule, and was so jeered by his comrades, that life, for at least another year, must be a burthen to him.

Then there is the strange hope which possesses boyhood—the strange hope in the future. They talk about what they intend to be; and how they like this trade or that trade, or this or that profession. Life is all mystery to them; yet they are not wholly dead to a sense of what its reality may be; and as their years grow towards youth,

and give hints of coming adolescence, this thought of the future grows into an excitement which, for a time, eats up the whole of life, and bears them along into all manner of strange dreams, and schemes, and wayward imaginings, the reality all the while lying beyond them, but revealing itself in shreds and patches, till they grow into the full consciousness of its serious import, and feel the first pressure of responsibility.

So life passes phase after phase, and manhood comes by a slow growth, and continues to ripen until we have so grown out of the boy-skin that we can look down upon it, almost doubting that it was ever ours; until a flood of these boyish memories encircles us and we are once more assured of our beginning in the world and rejoice that we were boys indeed.

For ourselves, we would be boys ever; not in orchard-robbing, milk-churning, or pelting at the church clock; but in freshness of feeling,—in freedom from conventional rules and the coldness of polished hypocrisy,—in hearty fellowship with all we meet, and in the strong hope in the future; the forward-looking, earnest-striving, hopeful ambition to tear aside the cobwebs of prejudice and falsity, and enter with pride and hilarity into the life that lies before us. Off with your kid gloves, man, and pluck the blackberries!



THE SOUL IN NATURE.

THERE are certain philosophers who maintain that all existence is essentially material; while there are others who hold with equal stubbornness, that there are no entities but those of a spiritual kind. Not to day only, but from the birthday of the world, have these two opposite doctrines been repeatedly brought into collision; and the question, as far as philosophers are concerned, is as much unsolved as ever. But it is not always the philosopher who deals most acutely with philosophy; and it sometimes happens that the idea of a poet, or the tradition of an uncultivated antiquity, throws more light on a topic under dispute than the most elaborate reasonings of men schooled in disputation. So it is in regard to this question of matter and spirit. The ancient poets, in their strange fables, asserted the prevalence of soul in nature, and continually carried back the mind from material to spiritual things. The ancient creeds of the world embodied the same thought; and whether we refer to the Indian, Egyptian, or Grecian mythologies, we find that a spiritual existence is everywhere granted, and that body and soul in man, body and soul in nature, are unities universally adopted as respectively essential to each other. The Hindoos say—when Brahme sleeps, all existence passes away; but when Brahme wakes, his thoughts take shape under the agency of Brahma, and creation follows. What is Brahme but Deity, whose will controls Brahma or Nature, and through thought gives impulse to a perennial birth of beauty, each separate birth being the expression of that thought or Will which called it into action? The Greeks had Proteus, who took many shapes, yet never lost his identity; and Proteus was an impersonation of the creative power working underneath and continually revealing itself, never in two forms alike, yet ever the same in purport and essence. Proteus is Brahma at three removes, degraded somewhat by his passage through the Egyptian mythology, into which he passes with other gods from India, and so into the fanciful, but scarcely sublime category of Hellenic deities.

Literatures, mythologies, traditions, all attest the union of matter and spirit; and instinct, turning a deaf ear to the propoundings of the spiritualist and the dogmas of the materialist, declares for the two elements and holds them essential to each other. Science completes this work, and marries the two worlds together by the wedding-ring of universal law, which it is the task of science to comprehend and apply in accordance with the strictest generalities. Let it not be thought, however, that this work is yet complete,—for in the infancy of science we can only expect approximations; and such of these as physics are capable of affording, the labour of Oersted has thrown together in one of the most enchanting volumes ever published, which has attained a cosmopolitan celebrity, under the title of the *Soul in Nature*.*

In this work the great Danish philosopher employs the reasoning which scientific facts supply in the defence of that part of the popular faith which asserts the universal existence of spirit, or rather the universal prevalence of thought in nature. As far as it is possible to reduce his views to the compass of a short essay, let us endeavour to do so, and with a hope that such a reduction of ample particulars into brief generalities will not in any way mar the profound reasonings of so genuine a philosopher.

First then, how do we gain a knowledge of the outer world? Not surely by the senses only; for in our quick views of things we apprehend their meaning readily by merely viewing portions of them, *inferring* the remainder of the conditions which are requisite to a complete appreciation of the object. We have a perfect idea of a tree, with branches, leaves, bark, buds, and fruit, from a mere glimpse of a portion of the trunk through a window or a crevice; and we recognise a book *as a book* by merely laying our hands on a portion of it in the dark. What then? why;—inasmuch as we do not grasp the things themselves, but infer their existence by mere glimpses of them, so we are indebted for our knowledge of the world to the impressions which things are capable of producing upon us, such impressions being converted into thoughts by union with the collective experience with which former impressions have furnished us. Now to make an impression on a being capable of thought, requires in the object an

* *The Soul in Nature*. By Hans Christian Oersted. Edited by Leonora and Joanna Horner. London: H. G. Bohn.

active existence; but a stone, lying still by the roadside appears the deadest thing, the most immobile and passive existence it is possible to conceive; and to assign it an active existence seems absurd. Yet that stone is dragged downwards by the force of gravitation; it presses towards the centre of the earth and meets with the resistance offered it by the stone on which it rests. That second stone is pressed upon by the first, and is also impelled downward by the force of gravitation, but is prevented from descending by other stones on which it is superimposed; while all of these again are in the same condition—driven down by gravitation, yet prevented from descending further by the objects which support them. Again, the second stone, which bears the weight of the first, and the third stone bearing the weight of the second, are each subjected to the pressure of the body above them, and that pressure—comparatively immeasurable though it is—tends to compress the particles of the body pressed upon; while the elasticity inherent in the particles of the body pressed upon causes them to rebound, and so prevents them being crushed or altered permanently in shape. It is just such an assemblage of forces—pressure in one direction, resistance in another, general tendency towards a centre and repulsion from the centre by virtue of the accumulation already there—of which the globe consists, and to which it owes its shape, rotation on its axis, and motion round the sun. If then each separate stone by the wayside, plays a part in a system so extensive and so complete, how can its existence—lifeless, motionless, as it seems—be anything than the most active that can be imagined?

Again, if we look round on nature, we discover certain forms of existence which we may term permanent; yet these very permanent forms only exist by virtue of the incessant change which they are undergoing. The oak tree, which gave Adam its shadow in the happy garden, and the nightingale which hallowed Eve's connubial sleep, are seen again to day; the oak-tree has the same shaped leaves, the nightingale the same warbling song, though the *identical* oak and nightingale which we are supposing to have inhabited Eden have both long since perished. We view a waterfall, and make drawings of its shape and measurements of its altitude; and we consider it the same waterfall ten years afterwards, when we find it occupying the same place and exhibiting the same form as the one represented in our drawing of ten years' old. Yet no one will suppose that after an interval of ten years we see the same water, the same plants, or even the

same rocks; for while it will be readily admitted that fresh floods have been continually flowing over the precipice, and fresh plants springing up in the surrounding soil, it must be remembered also that the rocks have been also wearing away above, while a deposit of fresh particles is being continually made by the water below. Yet in all these mutable things—and nature is equally mutable all through—the Invariable in type is to be easily traced, for that does exist even more definitely than the very mutation which we see. The *idea* of a waterfall is the invariable result which the fall of an *ever-renewing* flood,—the dispersion of an endless *succession* of drops,—the roaring and foaming of particles which *never remain an instant in the same position*, convey to the mind; so that out of a *series of effects* we gain *one thought*, which may be called the thought of nature inherent to this particular phenomenon. There is no animal, plant, mineral, or gas, but is passing through a succession of changes, growth, decay, dissolution, recombination; yet each one has a permanent existence by virtue of the thought which it represents, because the laws of nature are constant; and however fleeting and fading the forms of the world, the idea of creation is continually reproduced, and through the medium of the ever-changing material, the unchanging and eternal spirit is to be seen.

The moment we arrive at this stage of thought, we perceive how hollow are those assertions of the superiority of matter,—how vain those endeavours to disprove the existence of mind, over which so many have wasted their lives, hopelessly forswearing the very intellect which by its partial views led them into a complexity of errors. Before this fact the very earth passes into the condition of a shadow; and beyond the almost intangible forms of material existence lies a thought more solid than the adamant,—a thought which operates silently, and finds utterance and representation in that world of change which lives only to embody the idea of permanence. The flower, the tree, the cloud, the sunbeam, the granite rock, have no existence but as letters in the alphabet of nature. As letters in an alphabet, they are woven and interwoven into syllables and words, and as letters of an alphabet again displaced to enter into new combinations. As letters of an alphabet they exist also, not for themselves, but as elements through which Intelligence is spelt into expression, and thought fashioned into visible form. What is the flower but an assemblage of tissue, which is again but an assemblage of gases.

What is the cloud but an assemblage of water-drops, atmospheric air, electricity, and ammonia? That same water, air, electricity, and ammonia, fall in a shower, and are each absorbed by the plant; and, tomorrow, the very same elements, which appeared in the heavens like a golden car for the sun, or a group of cherubim winging upward through the ether, are seen in the form of a lowly violet, the elements that formed the cloud lend softness to its purple tint, freshness to its grateful odour, and healthy greenness to its heart-shaped leaves; how then could the cloud which yesterday floated in the blue heaven, and to day forms the tissues of a plant, be said to have any existence but as a letter in an alphabet which Nature is everlastingly weaving into prose syllables or poetic rhymes?

But there is a higher fact revealed in this philosophy, namely, that the laws which we perceive working as instruments of power are the laws of reason, and are as truly in harmony with the human mind as with that higher mind from which all things spring. So true is it, that naturalists have frequently deduced natural laws from reason alone, and have afterwards discovered them really existing in nature. From the fact that bodies mutually attract each other, Newton deduced, that as the distances of bodies increase, their mutual attraction decreases; and that an effect proceeding from one point becomes weaker in proportion as the square of distances increases. Both these conclusions have been verified by appeals to nature, and the true laws of planetary motions have thus been traced out as fruits of human reason resting on its own strength alone, and asserting that such and such *must be*, because such and such already exists. Kepler's great laws of the motions of the heavenly bodies were discovered in this way; and it is well known that Leverrier measured the weight, velocity, distance, and constitution of the planet Neptune without having seen it, and so determined its existence by the aid of reason alone.

By the very fact that man is a part of nature, so his reason is also natural, or in harmony with the reason manifested in natural law. Were the laws of nature antagonistic to the infinite reason, they could not exist; were they inconsistent with human reason, man could not comprehend them;—hence we know that in the great unity of the spiritual and material, man is also concerned, and inseparably united in the living idea of the Almighty power by whom all things are created. From the moment that we perceive this truth, the

walls of space and time fall down and the soul finds an inheritance of immortality in its merely spiritual existence, needing none of the aids of external reasoning to endow it with everlasting life.

The philosophy of the beautiful is wrapt up in this fact. Metaphors and poetical images derive their origin and significance from it. The analogies which the imaginative mind readily perceives between objects which to ordinary apprehension seem so dissimilar, are traceable to the same source. Indeed, strictly speaking, the whole creation is only a bundle of analogies.

We are accustomed to the recognition of beauty, and seldom pause in our admiration to inquire the source of the beautiful. Yet the beautiful is to be found by the man of science, and is merely the last expression of a series of minute facts. Take the instance of the fountain. In this, the rising jet of water consists of a number of particles, all spherical in form, which, as they ascend, gradually increase in breadth, and at last bend over in the form of a parabola and descend to the basin. The velocity continually decreases from the point where the jet first rushes forth to the point where it bends over in a graceful curve, and it is this decrease of velocity in ascending which gives the column of water its tapering form,—for it always tapers downwards from a broad convex sheet to a thin compressed jet. This downward tapering of the column and parabolic outline of the falling summit are what most readily strike us as beautiful in a fountain,—and these phenomena are simply the result of the opposing forces of the rising jet and attraction of the earth. The prismatic colours and the rich musical tones also combine to complete the harmony,—and thus the idea of the fountain is the result of an assemblage of details, each of which contributes an essential part of the whole.

Man, too, is a part of this; his soul is a part of the great soul which pervades nature; and to every beat of his heart the great heart of the universe answers with a kindred throb. By his relationship to outward things, he is enabled to comprehend them, and in so doing he finds that the laws of the external world are consistent with the thoughts within himself. Does such a conclusion make him dread mortality? if so, let him trust the history of his soul to faith, which is as much above reason as reason is above the brute matter on which it impresses its speaking image. If the "clodded earth," sending up its breath in flowers, has a soul by which it is united to all the links of diversified being; if man, too, has a soul not merely obedient to

reason as in the brutes, but awakened to self-consciousness and so far free in agency, then by all these links of causation he shall trace up his relation to God, the first link in this trembling chain of spiritual impulses. Into his nostril did Deity breathe the breath of life, and this soul which beats its wings eternally within his brain and bosom, is the incarnation of that holy breath which brought him into being. For this reason, while he fears not to admit that the material forms of the world are the least tangible, so for his own soul he can afford to rest on faith.



THE SPARROW.

WE confess to a great partiality for the sparrow. There is something hearty in his impudence (London boys call him "cheeky")—something funny in his domestic habit, and in his love very much of the heroic. Our partiality, though, has a deeper source than the superficial traits of sparrow-life, and springs from the constancy of the sparrow as an associate of man everywhere. He is the last representative of bird-life left to the smoke-dried citizen, just as the grass is the last relic of vegetable life which still clings to him. The sparrow will make itself a home in the most sooty covert under grim tiles, and between the blackened chinks in chimneys and waterspouts; and the grass will spring up between the flags in the closest court or alley, or on the most barren heap of rubbish in a dirty corner. This proximity to us, however, is fatal to the sparrow as an object of study, and when an amateur ornithologist commences the formation of a museum, the sparrow is the last specimen that finds a home there. We watch our human neighbours too closely, and very often allow slander to supply what ignorance suffers to escape: but our out-door neighbours, the sparrows, are, from their very neighbour-like qualities, overlooked, and substituted in the attention by things more rare. We shall therefore recount the history of the sparrow, and say a few words on his character as a social being, hoping thereby "to point a moral and adorn a tale."

The house-sparrow (*Fringilla Domestica*) belongs to the most interesting of the bird families, being a member of the *Fringillidæ*, or the Finches, which includes most of the birds of song, and those immediately interesting in their association with man. Spread pretty equally over Europe and the north of Africa, on the plains of India, and in the passes of the Himalaya, he is everywhere the companion of man, and is the only bird whose habit it is to be at every season in close attendance on human dwellings. Considered as an individual, the sparrow exhibits a remarkable mixture of opposite qualities. When made to pass through the sanitary processes which a city

sparrow requires for the exhibition of his aboriginal clothing, he appears in a true quaker garb, of chestnut, ash, and black, trim in clothing, pert in manner, positively pretty, yet still quakerish. But he belies his looks; for he is a thief, a pugilist, and an everlasting gossip. He is everything by turns, and adapts himself to every new condition and circumstance without the least regard to that motto of Emerson's which requires us to "walk upright and vital," and to maintain our integrity under all trials. He will eat the daintiest food; and if that is not at hand, will forage on any dustheap, and eat the veriest garbage. Even in feeding he is a paradox; for if the supply be scant, he searches keenly, and is content with what he finds himself; but the moment he lights in a land of plenty—as, for instance, a stone-pavement covered with crumbs, or a granary with a hole in the roof—he immediately abandons the good habit of foraging on his own account, and filches from his neighbour. He has great faith in the sweet flavour of forbidden food, and eats that which he has stolen with indescribable relish.

But it is as a member of a community that the sparrow appears in his true light. He is a sociable fellow and loves company. Nothing more delights him than to meet a score of his companions on the top of a pear-tree within view of a kitchen "whence smells arise" along with pieces, and there to beguile the afternoon with small conversation, and the first lines of songs which none of them can sing through, with occasional sallies after food, and then a fight or two, and a gossip, as before. At roosting-time he has compunctions; and for fear he should die in the night—cut off by a black cat even in the act of digesting the stolen provender—he turns religious, and mumbles a few disjointed prayers, with his head leaning on an ivy leaf, and after another incoherent gossip dozes off, in a state of plethoric sobriety.

The sparrow is precocious. He enters the world "on his own hands" or claws, at six weeks old; he quarrels with his parents, and attempts to kick them out of the nest a day or two afterwards, and goes on all sorts of voyages and travels, and gets steeped in crime within two months of being fledged. When nine months old, he marries and sets up a domestic establishment, and during courtship, and the first of the honeymoon, keeps the neighbourhood in constant alarm with his repeated quarrels and sanguinary fights. He is great in war, particularly that ignoble warfare which may be best likened

to an Irish row, wherein ten or fifteen rush pell-mell together in the branches of a pear-tree, each with a war-whoop of his own, while fighting all the rest, and the whole body rushing together in a confused heap of birds and voices, as if they would sacrifice their blood to the last drop. Just as they have converted the highest fork of the tree into a Thermopylæ, and Xerxes and the Greeks are heaped together, beak and claw, the fight suddenly ceases, and a few scattered chirps are all that remain of the fierce din of battle. These rows chiefly take place in spring; towards the middle of June they have entirely ceased, and the summer and autumn pass tranquilly, without a single breach of the peace.

When on the point of marriage, the sparrow's life is indeed one of excitement. He has his home to build, his bride to protect, and what with the search for food and building materials, and the frequent challenges to combat to which his love prompts him, beak, claw, and wing are kept in great activity. He is by no means fastidious in regard to the materials of his nest; and, like an Arab in the desert, he makes freehold property of any spot that suits him, and there determines to build his home, and die if necessary in defending it. Every variety of size, fabric, and locality enters into the details of sparrow-nests. If moss and feathers are to be had, none know better how to appropriate them, and if these comforts are scarce, he weaves together bits of rag, straws, wisps of hay, dry grass, and every variety of textile refuse which finds its way out of doors; sometimes labouring with much pride of heart in the construction of a neat circular nest, and at others, crowding together enough "marine stores" to fill a hat, content with the dirtiest hole at the top of a waterspout for its reception. When he builds in a tree—which is very seldom, though Professor Rennie says to the contrary—he usually constructs a domed nest; that is, a large globular framework of straw and feathers, with a hole in the side for ingress and egress; so that a good shelter is afforded by the circular roof and walls. In the country he houses under ricks, and in holes in barns, and very often turns the martin out of doors and takes possession of its mud-cabin; but in town he mostly creeps into the holes and recesses amongst chimneys, eaves, and broken brickwork; and always covers the floor of his castle with a thick matting to protect his mate and her brood from the cold.

Owing to the partiality of the sparrow for bits of thread and woollen rag, he sometimes gets entangled in the fastenings of his own

tent, and it is not uncommon for fierce struggles to take place under the tiles, where some unlucky cock or hen has got entrapped. He partly deserves this for the careless way in which he builds his walls, but he scarcely deserves to be hanged in his own noose when pursuing his calling industriously. Such fatal catastrophes happen, however, and not a few sparrows fall victims to their propensity for woollen goods. Rennie relates an instance of a pair of sparrows which had carried off a long piece of bass; but when this had been successfully stowed in the nest, it appeared they had not sufficient skill to work it into the fabric, and both birds got their feet inextricably entangled in the folds, and were held close prisoners. Around them assembled their cackling neighbours, who appeared to be occupied in scolding them for their folly, instead of imitating the mouse that released the lion—in assisting them to get rid of their entanglements. They were taken down and freed from their fetters, but were too exhausted to survive their struggles, and a pair of their scolding neighbours took possession of their premises a few days after. A note in the first volume of the *Zoological Journal* states that a pair of sparrows which had built at a house at Poole were observed to continue their regular visit to the nest long after the time when the young birds take flight. This unusual circumstance continued throughout the year, and in the winter, a gentleman who had all along observed them, determined on investigating its cause. He mounted a ladder, and found one detained a prisoner by means of a piece of string or worsted, which formed part of the nest, having become accidentally twisted round the leg. Being thus incapacitated from procuring its own sustenance, it had been fed by the willing and watchful parents. A still more tragical occurrence is related in the *London News* of January 20, 1844. A sparrow had built its nest in the eye-socket of the carved head of an ox, which formed part of a frieze of one of the buildings in Sackville Street, Dublin. By some means he had got his neck into a noose, and in struggling to get free had fallen out of the nest, suspended by the neck, like a wretched criminal, from the eye-socket of a skull.

But the sparrow's cares do not end with nest-building. Some fine spring morning he wakes up as usual, and finds his mate in an ecstasy of chirping, and looking round him, discovers a clean oval egg, with a very white ground, variegated with ash and brown spots and streaks. Before he goes to roost, the cackling begins again, and as he comes in with a caterpillar for supper, she shows him another, and so on till

there are five or six. Then is he a husband in earnest. No intruding sparrow dare take shelter near his nest; no cat even warm it with her feline breath. He is all wings and claws, and his beak is a dagger to transfix every enemy to his domestic peace. He is an example of perpetual motion, too, and hurries here and there for dainty bits of meat which the cook has thrown out, fat snails, hirsute caterpillars, pickings from the pig-trough, and bread-crumbs, carrying them into the nest for his faithful partner, who receives each with a low chuckle of satisfaction. Not food alone, but every stray feather, wisp of wool, or bunch of cotton-thread is carried up also to increase the warmth of the nest and preserve the eggs from chill, while both the parents are away in the morning and evening. He not only knows no fatigue in his unceasing search for food, but he takes his turn at sitting while she airs herself at daybreak, and the moment she returns he darts off again in search of feathers, grubs, and bread-crumbs. He is the model husband now, and has given up fighting and quarrelling. By-and-by there are weak voices crying for food, and a number of naked children stare him in the face, all crying in one dismal tone as they squat in a confused heap with their wide yellow gaping mouths for continued supplies. He is astonished at the voracity of his own children; they would eat up mother and father if they had but the strength to do it. He flies here, there, and everywhere; and however much he brings, there is always the same cry, and the same cluster of gaping jaws to greet him. It is enough for both parents now to keep their six juvenile gizzards grinding, while the six juvenile mouths, like separate and determined Olivers, keep crying out for "more."

With this attention and good feeding, the babes in the nest soon become babes in the wood, and the fond parents, inflated with parental pride, take out their chelping children on short excursions over tiles and parapets, and then down into gardens, where they both feed them alternately from their own mouths. While the father is offering them what he has brought in his bill, the mother is foraging elsewhere, and when she returns, he darts off again, and thus protection and food are both administered. A week's exercise in this way completes the education of the fledglings, and then the sparrow colony breaks up; the old citizen birds leave the town to sun themselves in corn-fields, and make acquaintance with the rustics that dwell in the thatch. An ivied wall, which has sheltered fifteen or twenty pairs in spring, is almost deserted before July, and the cheerful chelping, which woke

the townsman in the morning, and cheered him as he took tea at the open window in the evening, is now scarcely heard, a few young birds of the new brood being all that are left to people the once populous city in the ivy. The sparrow is never silent long, and so these few keep up the sparrow music through the summer; and to an ordinary observer, who sees wings in motion in every garden, and hears the unmistakeable sparrow chirp all day long, the houses seem by no means deserted. But he would only need to watch them as they come to roost, to note the comparison between the few that remain and the crowds that haunted the same roosting grounds in spring.

Towards September the numbers thicken, and when the last glean-
ing is carried from the harvest-field, those that remained with the gleaners turn their faces to the town, and in a short time the gardens and the eaves are crowded. The morning matins and the evening vespers are as loud as ever, and there is something really cheering in the confused chaos of voices, and the whirring of wings, and rustling of feathers, which blends so harmoniously with the growth of the morning daylight and the increase of the evening darkness. "Just as the leaves begin to fall," says Rusticus, "the sparrows begin to hold their 'evenings at home;' and strange evenings they are; such chattering and chirping; such hopping up and down; such changings of places; such bickering and squabbling; such fidgetting and wriggling; the row often lasting more than an hour, and only ceasing when they have chattered themselves to sleep." Towards winter, the sparrow grows impudent, bold, and thievish. He will feed at your feet if you give him encouragement, and may be tempted to the window-ledge for crumbs, or into the room, even, with a little patience and the absence of everything likely to threaten his safety. As soon as Christmas is past, he looks out for the green sprigs of bulbous plants, and nibbles down the snow-drops and crocuses, and enlivens the dull days of February and March with his incessant chatter and repeated quarrels. It is not fair, however, to charge him with indiscriminate destruction; there are few garden plants for which he has any regard, and the vast havoc he makes in the insect broods amply compensate for the stealing of a little green meat for his young ones.

But the sparrow has his enemies. He lives no life of uninterrupted enjoyment. His acts of petty larceny bring upon him the vengeance of the farmer, who sets a price upon his head, and thereby encourages vagrancy and destructiveness in all the ragged urchins of a village.

Arsenic, *nux vomica*, and baited traps, are offered him, and he takes his choice and dies forthwith, to haunt the fields afterwards in a ghostly shape, and revenge himself by watching the growth and multiplication of caterpillars—caterpillars which he, if living, would have destroyed, but which, left to fatten on the farmer's crops, entail upon him ten times the cost of a sparrow. Then there is the screech owl, who now and then finds her way to the nest when both parents are out, and gobbles up the callow brood, and if she could, would do a similar office for the parents. But the windhover hawk is his most deadly enemy. He dreads the high-flying mouser, and has no appetite for growing corn when she is within sight. It is seldom that he suffers in a positive way, for the windhover is mostly content with a few mice and cockchafers, but the dread is instinctive; he knows the hawk-like swoop, and he cowers under cover without making the necessary distinctions. As to scarecrows, he snaps his bill at such in perfect contempt. He views them as demonstrations of eccentricity, —matters for amusement rather than fear,—and after a careful survey of a straw-stuffed man, with boots turned behind, and face without expression, he deems it the relic of some gunpowder-plot freak, and so far from being frightened, chooses it immediately as a suitable spot for his nest. Old hats stuffed with red rag; dead dogs and cats crucified on broom sticks, and rows of gay ribbons threaded on sticks, he holds in equal disregard, and if puzzled by them for a day or two, pays no more attention to them after he has seen their emptiness; and as to boys with horns and clappers, he takes no alarm from their hideous noises, but keeps at a safe distance in case of stones. Thus, in every sense, the sparrow is very individual; his ways and means are interesting, though neither song nor plumage claim any particular regard. He has character, and that redeems him from indifference. Song and plumage are both poor things compared with character: it is character we seek in men; and strong individualities make even rogues tolerable; for, after all, Will, which is the foundation of individuality, compels reverence, no less in feathered than in coated bipeds.

THE INNER LIFE.

EMERSON remarks in his beautiful essay on "Gifts," that "Flowers and fruits are always fit presents,—flowers, because they are a proud assertion that a ray of beauty outvalues all the utilities of the world. These gay natures contrast with the somewhat stern countenance of ordinary nature; they are like music heard out of a workhouse;" and it is in the sympathy which all natural objects have for the best sentiments of our nature which makes them always acceptable. Man is something more than a bundle of petty cares and jealousies: he has within him a world of living beauty, and an existence ever seeking for closer sympathy with moral worth, and anxiously striving after higher states of perfection. But in the intercourse of men with each other the tendencies and desires and passions, which have been implanted within them for purposes of beauty—and beauty is the highest form of utility—get pushed beyond the legitimate sphere of their action, and become characterized in their development as vices. Hence, in all cities and large aggregations of men, the true nobility and intrinsic stamp of human character is sunk below the duplicities which float upon the surface of customs and usages. Thus civilization, viewed in a narrow and partial light, has all the appearance of soul-murder; but, seen through the "optic glass" of a transcendental philosophy, simply indicates a necessary phase of the human mind in its progress upward; and is a manifestation, not of the destruction and annihilation of virtue, but of the perversion and distortion of our legitimate aims and actions. To look at modern society in its existing state of complexity and petty warfare, it has all the semblance of a huge mad-house, but seen as a necessary condition of the human mind in its transition from a rugged barbarity to a high and exalted morality and beauty, it appears as a plain fact, but significant of the multiform changes and modifications of the same identical purpose, still striving to evolve itself through all the ages of the world.

But when we leave this enclosed world of antipodean and twisted interests, where we are eternally compelled to hedge and dodge, and

dance a shapeless game of evasion, and go into the pine woods or mountain solitudes, where Nature still wears the freshness of a primeval morning, and awaits with complacent brow, and meekly folded hands, the appeals of her repentant children ; we come into the sheen and lustre of a new-made life, and grow young again in the beauty and simplicity of a rugged and heroic virtue. The soul, tattered and despoiled, and weather-beaten in the strife and storm of petty contentions and mean and degrading tendencies, awakens again to the vigour and freshness of its true life, and seems to have been made anew. With men, the true soul seems ever in the presence of a blight or pestilence, and droops and fades as in the hot and parching air of a sirocco : but with nature, the true old love of innumerable ages comes dawning upon it, and it grows and expands in the opening of a new future, a future teeming with truth and beauty ; and finds in this new realm of thought and perception, an insight into its highest tendencies. In the buzz and distracting whirl of the world, the only hope of satisfaction seems to be in sorrow, for there we expect to meet with "sharp peaks and edges of truth ;" but in nature, all is perpetual jubilee and song, and every feature wears the aspect of festive hilarity, —pure, ennobling and true. The sunshine of Paphian skies seems ever dawning upon the horizon of a holier hope, the warmth and fruition of a new summer seems ever alighting upon the petals of unfading flowers, and in the dark brows of Dodonian oaks we see the type of ceaseless renewal, and unspared exuberance. The soul grows and grows, and feels in its inmost recesses the awakening light and divinity of its highest spiritual truths.

Life is a constant flux of moods or conditions, evanescent and transmutable, yet together forming a great circle in which the true character is encentred. Be the mood what it may, it is but a reflex of the combined conditions of the true character which lies beneath, and the outward and visible influences which surround us. Every man wishes for good, wishes to attain to the practice of virtue, and to gather to himself the noblest thoughts ; but while we glide hither and thither under masks and pretensions, we mutually deceive ourselves and others, and the world comes at last to wear the garb and colouring of a fantastic dream. But with Nature all is pure, all is true, constant and abiding, and from every thread of her endless fabric of loveliness comes a voice of sympathy and love.

Thus it is that in our earlier life, before the soul is enveloped in

cobwebs and dust, that the love of nature is warmest in the heart; and that ever afterward, when that same love awakens in us, we feel the replenished vigour of an ascending life, and the untold joy of primal beauty. We seem to be brought back again to the flowery brink of our budding youth, and to stand once more upon the threshold which then separated the sweet years of childhood from the mysterious, yet promising future which then lay before us; and in which our ambition and our hopes were coined into realities, by the energies of our hands and the firmness of our hearts.

There is ever hope for that man who feels the freshness of his youth like a soft fragrance fanning his hot brow, when he wanders into the wild solitude, where nature still beams in the radiance of untroubled tranquillity, and the hand of man has not yet begun the work of demolition, but where all is vigour, and freshness, and reality. Beside the mountain torrent, gleaming as with the soft light of a perpetual morning, and in the pine woods, where night hovers all day long, he feels the purple flush of youth once more upon his cheek, and the generous sympathies of his earlier life burning in his heart. Then emotions are kindled in the breast, of which even an angel might be proud, and *to live* is a joy unutterable. Memory is then a sweet picture; Love is an odour breathing of Heaven; Hope sits beside us and points upwards lovingly, and the inheritance of life is a boon more sacred than the possession of a world, for it gives us more than a world—an Universe of beauty within ourselves.

This is why, in the first efforts of the anxious heart, that all books which set forth the harmonies of nature are eagerly devoured. Every genuine student will remember when the most simple and unassuming books possessed inexpressible charms, if they but spoke in harmony with the poetry and moral sympathies which dwelt within his own breast; if they breathed of green fields and flowers, and sought to embody and embalm all that was beautiful in sentiment, and simple in thought. When we look back to our earliest readings in the great book of nature, and our first communings with nature's worshippers, we seem carried to some sweet oasis in the dreary wilderness of life, where nothing but beauty, and the aspirations for a higher life could find a place. Then every book which had the least smell of green fields or water brooks, or was in any way imbued with the poetry of nature, was devoured page by page, as if it were manna but just fallen from heaven.

The high philosophy of beauty, in which the ancients delighted, is a better symbol of the manifestation of the sentiment than any which modern poets can afford. They said "that the soul of man, embodied here on earth, went roaming up and down in quest of that other world of its own, out of which it came into this, but was soon stupified by the light of the natural sun, and unable to see any other objects but those of this world, which are but shadows of real things. Therefore, the Deity sends the glory of youth before the soul, that it may avail itself of the beautiful bodies, as aids to its recollection of the celestial good and fair." * And, although the first utterances of the Inner Life are seen in the youth in the love of nature, and a growing fondness, and a kindling sympathy for that higher beauty, which is in itself impersonal, and beyond the stretch of thought, and which may flash upon him from the sunset, the gleam of waterfalls which leap amid wild islands green, the silence or the sleep of nature, or the dove-like eyes of the loved one of his heart; yet, this is but the first spark of a sentiment, which shall hereafter enlarge into a warm and generous flame, to light up all the world with the radiance of a new hope, and to bring the bosom in which it burns nearer to God. The awakening of the soul to the perception of beauty, encircling and multiplied, is its first step to the appreciation of beauty special. Then it expands in a sentiment more lofty and pure, and love becomes the ruling passion of the heart, and is a wreath of flowers upon manhood's brow. This new delight is but a sympathy made forceful and predominating, and for us it remakes the world, and forges all nature into spangles and stars, and summer sheen, and song, and makes every leaf and cloud articulate.

It gives the brow of age
A smack of youth, and makes the lip of youth
Shed perfumes exquisite.

This sentiment is ennobling, because it springs from that deep well of inexhaustible beauty which lies within us, unsullied and serene. It is the bond which shall unite all men and women together, and form them into one great circle of good and generous souls. Love is our highest assurance of this inward self, for beneath it nature hides

* Emerson.

the greatest purpose which she has to accomplish, namely, the perpetuity of the species. And if, when it shall knock at the door of our hearts, we give joy to its divine presence, and greet it as a ray of ethereal loveliness flashed out of the abyss of God, it will find us young, and keep us so for ever.

The province of the soul is not the province of the intellect. The spring of all feeling is from within, the source of all idea from without. The one is the office of the mind, the other the possession of the heart. Sentiment, an innate moral perception, is self-existent; intellect is the result of experience, and is acquired during time. Even Locke admits that "though it be not sense, as having nothing to do with external objects, yet it is very like it, and might properly enough be called an internal sense." The perceptions of moral beauty, of conscience, of virtue, of infinity, of God, are the faculties of the soul, and that takes cognizance of the outer world only to read therein the symbols of its own egressive law, and the constant exodus of its highest intelligence. It is only through the channel of the memory that the mind can take cognizance of a state of feeling or a sentiment; for the emotions of the heart—love, friendship, paternal care, pity or remorse, are not processes of logical sequence—are independent and foreign to all analysis, and are states or conditions self-induced to accord with the symbols which exist outwardly; as positive electricity always generates in the body with which it comes in contact a negative fluid, in order to restore the harmony between them.

To the soul, virtue is aboriginal; self-existent, not induced. It perceives and appreciates there and then, without weighing and estimating what pertains to itself; and plucks its own fruit where it stands, if there the fruit be. It is independent of experience, and does not perceive its objects in any relation as to time. In what bosom soever it abides, it sheds fragrance and music, as though flowers were blooming there, and angelic fingers were sweeping the tough fibres of the heart, to make them overflow with melody. Every scene and home of life is made sacred by it; and nature, conscious of its high relations to the Most High God, always heralds the great phases of its doom.

The tendency of the age is to sensualism on the one hand, and to extreme intellectualism on the other. But however grand and imposing the achievements of the intellect, in the wonders of the laboratory or the engine-house, that alone is insufficient. We care too

much for algebra, and chemistry, and the affairs of the household, and too little for that of the church; nay, every household should become a church, where the pervading spirit of all loveliness may sit enshrined, and where her votaries may kneel with fervent hearts to worship and offer sacrifice. It is our consuming folly to view all things in the cold light of the intellect, and to judge by the acquisition of facts, rather than by the enlargement of the highest sentiments. Are facts so necessary then? Have you exhausted all your previous stock? Or do you sit brooding there for some expected truth which shall show you the hollowness of your ways, but which while you sit there, and shut your ears to the beseechings of the soul shall never come, and you shall die at last a beggar. The sovereignty of the intellect has dwindled into cant, as much soul as you can muster avails; maugre that, all is barrenness and ashes. Events strengthen not the hope, for no length of time will ever ripen the contents of an empty barrel. If the intellect is our highest faculty, how comes it that so many of those who have been so highly endowed with this inheritance, have only died at last covered with shame at the perverted nature of their lives?—who, while stalking like petty gods among men, and transcending by the giant powers of their minds, have yet left a blight and pestilence in their path, as venomous reptiles leave their slimy tracks behind them. The names of Alexander, Pericles, Aspasia, Cataline, Alcibiades, Mirabeau, and Napoleon, only suggest a thousand more which might be quoted. And much to be deplored are the effects of our systems of trade, commerce, and education, in checking the growth of the best sentiments of our nature. The slow and steady calculations of gain and loss are appended like badges of charity to every effort which the pure soul would make to rescue some relic of itself from the wreck and destruction in which it finds itself immersed, and which threaten almost to strike God from the world. The influence of the senses is to circumscribe all things, and make the walls of space and time look solid and real, and to surround us with a world of insanity and corruption; but the moment we suffer the soul to speak we become advertized of the great possibilities of our being, and a heaven of truth opens before us, in which we may bathe as in an ocean which has neither let nor bound, and even to us, the attributes of God become possible. “The moment we indulge our affections, the earth is metamorphosed; there is no winter and no night; all tragedies, all *ennui* vanish—all duties even; nothing fills the proceed-

ing eternity but the forms all radiant of beloved persons." The moment the soul is assured of its acceptance to this universal realm, it acquires a new life, and a beaming satisfaction. Plato says, "lookest thou at the stars? If I were heaven with all the eyes of heaven would I look down on thee," and to the soul which is conscious of its high regard for the plain and solid beauty of its presentiments, the whole universe becomes but the speaking semblance of itself, and the bond of union between it and those it holds most dear.

All that the poet can teach us is his own impotency to express adequately the sentiments and feelings which surround us with each pulsing of the soft air, and with each echo of the wheeling sky. This power which abides within us is higher than intellect, more potent than will, and works through every fibre of our living hearts for good and beautiful purposes. It is the living soul of the world, the Alpha and Omega of this passing life, the *primum mobile* of all the virtues, and the vital force of all heroic actions. It is a power above the bolts and bars of thought, and fills up the space between the earth and heaven. It endows us with the rose of immortality, and gathers round us all the moments of the past and future: it can crowd a whole eternity into one hour, one single hour of immeasurable bliss.



THE LAND OF BLACKBERRIES.

What tho' no charms my person grace,
Nor beauty moulds my form, nor paints my face?
The sweetest fruit may often pall the taste,
While sloes and brambles yield a safe repast.

BLACKLOCK'S *Plaintive Shepherd*.

TALK not of the luscious land of vines; sing not the praises of blue heavens and rivers which flow through vintage banks; of Rhines, and Moselles, and Rhones, and Danubes; forget that there are regions of towering palms, and fruitful bananas, and golden prairies reaching to the sea,—lands all fragrant with mangolia blossoms, and jungles where the richest fruits rot, untouched, upon the mould; sigh not for Grecian vales and isles of Paphos; nor pine for the rose-gardens of Cashmere, nor for the scented bowers where the bulbul sings. Know that, here in this island of green meadows and luxuriant hedgerows, we speak the tongue of Lydegate; that we are compatriots with Spencer, Chaucer, Shakspeare, and Keats; and that it is the land of beechen woods and Druidical memorials; and above all, let us be grateful to the Providence which has placed us in the Land of Blackberries.

Blackberries! rich, juicy, cool, and gushing, which, in the days of boyhood, lured us with their jetty lusciousness, and made us forget old Horace and the *Pons Asinorum*, and in exchange for the Eton Grammar and the pickled birch, gave us a larger life in the green woods, made our young hearts beat with hopeful enthusiasm, and filled us with the first taste of life's poetry. Who then but would love blackberries, even though less delicious and refreshing to the palate than they really are? Who but would love the simple fruits which recalled the memories of orchard-robbing, school-mischief, April-fools, holiday-rambles, and frantic dogs with kettles or crackers at their tails? Blackberries,—ah! away we go, the sunshine is still blinking among the trees, and although the air grows chill, autumn is still ruddy, and

and the hedges are yet fruitful. There is Epping Forest, whither we went from Stepney at eight years of age "Blackberrying." We knew almost every dell, and cover, and tangled copse, and from any path could lead you direct to the richest garden of Blackberries. We knew the haunts of Hornsey, and Finchley, and Old Ford,—now, alas! little towns, or appendages to London,—long before we were twelve years of age; and many a dream of Robin Hood and Will Scarlet have we dreamt there among the fern, after having sated ourselves, after the fashion of Justice Greedy,—with the blackest of ripe Blackberries. There was always a charm about it, which neither tattered clothes, nor lacerated hands, nor angry looks at home, nor harsh words at school, could ever dispel; and to compensate for all the sorrows and trials of school drudgery and book education, we had the nobler education to be gained in the land of Blackberries. And now, after having sunned our hearts in the green ways of Saxon poetry, after having held companionship with the forests, and bugles, and green hills of Scott, and luxuriated among the lush and leafy coverts of Endymion Keats, besides many fair-spent hours over Ritson and Robert Herrick, how can we refrain from loving Blackberries? Blackberries, which speak so winningly of "yellow-girted bees," and "golden honeycombs," and "jagged trunks," and "unseen flowers in heavy peacefulness." Love them? ay! and away we go into the thick woods, far from the roar of cities and the tramp of men, far from the soul's prison-house, into the free air of bosky dells, where ragworts and harebells tremble, and the brambles hang their clouds of fruits.

This time to Cheshunt, fifteen miles from town, in the prettiest part of Hertfordshire. Through the ancient churchyard, glancing at the monuments of the Cromwells and the grassy mounds of many a sturdy Puritan, superseding Hervey's sickly *Meditations*, by thoughts which are always better suggested on the spot. Gathering as we go any precious little gem which may add to the herbarium, we reach Cheshunt House, and refresh our memories with the stories of Wolsey's pride and fall; thence to the shadow of a great beech in Cheshunt Park, to dine upon the grass, and discover a new and most "come-again" flavour in the beef and ham, which, despite our worship of the Blackberries, makes us feel keenly for the Vegetarians. Dinner over, through the green lanes to Goffe's Oak, gathering berries as we go, the first handful being offered as a libation to the earth, after the manner of school-boys and the ancients. At Goffe's Oak we rest for the

night, and enjoy that delicious slumber in a snowy bed which can only be enjoyed at a country inn in the land of blackberries.*

The mornings are grey and misty at Blackberry time, so before venturing on the great expedition before us, let us be internally fortified with a good breakfast. The fragrant coffee tickles the sense until the nose seems to laugh at the conceit, and the palate, beguiled by the bland richness of the fresh butter and new-laid eggs, threatens to forget the anticipations of more Blackberries.

We are away at last, upon the roadside, gathering as we go from the brambles that skirt the pathways. Away with conventionalities; fling away the books; and let us for the present live for Blackberries. The berries are as black as death, and as delicious as the first kiss of a fond lover. There they hang like sugary showers of healing and delectable manna; hatless, on tiptoe, forgetting drawing-room and parlour courtesy, scorning etiquette and the doctrine of appearances, and like children in our aboriginal wildness, we gather and eat, we eat and gather. Satisfied, we walk on, and take the path to the left, which leads to "Newgate Street" and "Little Berkhamstead." The country, with its woody hills and miles and miles of wheatlands, turnip-fields, and meadows, swells grandly around us. There are copses and forests of pine stems; broad fields of cruciferous blossoms glowing like golden seas with ripples and billows of amber. Up above lie the woods; and the partridges and pheasants whirr away in heavy flight to shelter. The toil up-hill has cooled our energies, so we step in here to a small roadside inn, and seated in the only public room, which serves as kitchen, pantry, and public parlour, regale ourselves with a sweet draught of "Prior's Entire." Here are eight houses and a mud cabin, backed on one side by the splendid park of Squire Ellis, flanked to the left with the richly wooded hills, through which the road rises and falls like an undulating line of foam upon a dark green sea of rolling billows; behind lies the valley we have just left,

* Goffe's Oak stands on Cheshunt Common, overlooking the ancient lands of Guffley, and commanding a splendid panorama of hill country beyond. The tree from which the inn takes its name, is an ancient oak planted in the reign of William the Conqueror, and which is now a hollow ruin, though still bearing a head of foliage. The inn is one of the best samples which remain of the "Good Old Time," and still preserves the English characteristics of female beauty, domestic comfort, and hearty good cheer.

with its banks of harebells, wild thyme, and yellow ragworts, and on all hands the country lies basking in sunshine, full of fertile promise, beauty, and vegetable exuberance, and dotted and fringed all over with bushy lines of Blackberries. Down the steep hill towards the wood, up again, as the road passes over the upland, and a new scene breaks upon us. Down again into the thick of the wood, and feast our eyes on the interminable silvery birch masts, which gleam away into the dark background, like the spars of an anchored fleet all wedged together in a green sea of fern, while a solemn rustling in the green twinkling foliage above sounds like a chorus of dryads, or the song of liberated fays, which have been imprisoned in the glens since the days of Oberon and Titania. Blackberries again, richer, larger, and more pregnant with the cool mulberry flavour of any yet. Appetite grows keen, and we feel that we could eat all the woods contain, they are so grateful and delicious.

Alternating with Blackberries are crab-trees, loaded with fairy fruit ; then clumps of willow-herbs, here covered with rich purple blossoms, there powdered with downy seeds ; then again, St. John's-wort, then blue scabious, and then broad flushing sheets of crimson *lythrum*. Blackberries again and again, and stomachs and baskets are filled to repletion. The robins, and chaffinches, and willow-wrens, flutter and sing, and chirp about us ; and now and then the rabbit limps along through the brown brake, and the partridges run to cover. Between the singing and chirping of the birds, and the flutter of the wood-pigeon's wing, there is an occasional pause,—a dead stillness,—which is so solemn, so palpable to the sense, which has been all but stunned by the fret and din of cities, that it begets fear, and we tremble lest the rest-harrow which blooms on the bank should convert its spines into spears, and threaten us ; or that the earth should gape and let forth some monster of malignity, such as the knights encountered in the olden time. Silence is new to man, and as strange as it is new ; it is the searching and listening of the suspended sense which begets the mysterious feeling which accompanies it, and when it comes upon us in the world of green moss, and crushed leaves, and tangled branches, and Blackberries, we feel that we are alone with God, and come nearer to Him in the solitudes and the silence becomes a new voice, whispering of trust, and faith, and renewing love, and steadfast hope in the promised hereafter.

And here, sitting on the green bank, which is as soft and elastic

with the mossy growths of many years as any bed of down ; with the smiling face of one whom we love beside us, let us indulge in a soliloquy on the all-absorbing topic of Blackberries. Not that the silence of the woods needs to be broken by the voice of man, for he, too often, carries strife and tumult into regions which had else known peace, and blights the fresh face of Nature with his iniquities and feverish impulses. Nevertheless, it seems meet, and the shadows nod a welcome.

Well, this said luscious, jet-black berry, or fruit of the bramble, is a thing of no mean degree, either in its botanical or literary history. Its botanical characteristics ally it closely to the brilliant roses of our gardens, and to the velvet peach, and the apple and the cherry. It is, in truth, a rose, and its blossom, in shape and arrangement, is a miniature of the rose of the hedges. Its sprays are long and flexible, its juices are wholesome, and its fruit salutary and refreshing. The leaves and stems afford a valuable dye ; and its young tops were anciently eaten by the Greeks as a salad. It grows in every country of Europe, and over the broad moorlands of the north it produces abundance of its welcome fruits. Its homely name of bramble, from the Anglo-Saxon *bræamble*, or *bremel* (*anguis crucians*), signifies something furious or that which lacerates the skin ;* and suggests the hirsute nature of its stems. Hence,—“Doth the bramble cumber a garden? It makes the better hedge ; where, if it chance to prick the owner, it will tear the thief ;”† though in this sense the term is not confined among the Saxon writers to the Blackberry plant, but applied to others which are ragged and thorny. For instance,—

Swete as is the bramble flour
That beareth the red hepe, ‡

in which the wilding rose is “the bramble flour,” and not our own true Blackberry : though in another use of the word there is no doubt but the *Black*-berry is referred to,—

One of hem was a tre
That beareth a fruit of sauour wicke,
Full croked was that foule sticke,
And knottie here and their also,
And blacke as berry or any slo.§

* *Vide* Skelton by Dyce, l. pp. 187, 216, 278 ; and Chaucer's *Romaunt of the Rose*.

† Grew, *Cosmologia*, III. c. 2.

‡ Chaucer, *Rime of Sir Thopas*, v. 13.

§ Chaucer, *Rom. Rose*.

Now a right good plant is this, our wayside bramble, and one deserving a nobler vindicator than we. It grows bravely and endures all weathers, it sits beside the old oaks, and sees age come down and whiten their brows, keeping ever youthful and jovial itself. Renowned in story, from the time when it caught the garments of Demosthenes, as he fled coward-like from the field;* or when it alleviated with its rich mellowness the asperity of the Baptist's "locusts and wild honey;" or was strewed over the graves of Spartan heroes; or wove tassels of leaves and rose-shaped blossoms over the skeletons of Alexander's frozen army, or over the ghastly remains of humanity in Odin's Wood. Fair and welcome art thou, O humble and unambitious bramble, as when thou wert mingled with the earliest offerings of herbs, or scattered on the green altars of the ancient Gauls! Beautiful still, as when mingled with Æsop's happy gift,† when covered with elegies in deification of Rosalind, or when nodding a response to Wordsworth when he so sweetly sang,—

I heard a thousand blended notes,
 While in a grove I sat reclined,
 In that sweet mood when pleasant thoughts
 Bring sad thoughts to the mind.
 To her fair work did Nature link
 The human soul that through me ran;
 And much it grieved my heart to think
 What man has made of man.
 Through primrose tufts in that sweet bower
 The periwinkle trailed its wreaths;
 And 'tis my faith that every flower
 Enjoys the air it breathes.

But, alas! the learned in the lore of flowers attach to thy blossoms the idea of remorse. There is no cup so pure but dregs may be found at the bottom; and thou, with thy "gauzy satin frill," and tempting harvest of juicy blackness, art armed from head to foot with thorns,—thorns which lacerate and pierce the flesh, and like the bitter draughts along the path of pleasure, too often bid us taste of one before we reach the other. Why art thou girded round with thorns? is it that man may not pluck all the fruit, and thus some be left for the little birds who fear not brambles? or is there some lurking medicine in thy many

* Holland's *Plutarch*, p. 765.

† Æsop made an offering of flowers to the god Mercury, and was rewarded with the gift of inventing fables.

lancets, such as the Indians seek while rubbing their bodies with the prickly sela, or the old Romans pined for, when they sowed nettles to rub themselves? * Heaven knows! perhaps we get a blessing when we smart the most, and if God wills it, so let it be.

If all this availed not to make the bramble a dear thing, and teach the true glory of the Land of Blackberries, what shall avail against the fact (which we have intentionally deferred till now), that they were the only food of the poor "Children in the Wood," and that from day to day as they wandered through the dreary wilderness, unwatched by men, but cared for by God—he, with his arm round her little neck, she looking up in his face with a tear in her eye, and amid the occasional fears and alarms which beset them, feeling still safe while guarded by her boy. Who could pluck a Blackberry and think of this without letting fall a tear, and again thanking God that he dwells in a land where the lives and liberties of babes are so sacred, that that old story never yet failed to move a heart, even if it were a heart of stone; thanking God that it is the land of baby love, of boyish glee, and of Blackberries. Ah! the robin comes now year by year and strews leaves upon the graves of innocence,—Nature has a higher care for her children, and the daisies *will* grow over the grave of Keats, and the blue violet will linger about the resting-place of Shelley.

Well, with childhood's rosy memories, with antique legends and histories, ranging from that earliest age when men fed upon the simplest productions of the ground, when

Content with food which Nature freely bred,
On wildings and on strawberries they fed;
Cornels and bramble-berries gave the rest,
And falling acorns furnished out a feast,†

down to Rosalind and the "Children in the Wood," together with no end of uses in medicine and the arts, and that grandest of all uses, the making of conserves, preserves, tarts, pies, and puddings, and mingled with damsons, the richest syrup in the catalogue of modern confectionery, we say again,—Heaven bless the brambles, and all cheer to the Land of Blackberries!

From the silent wood, by a road to the left, we passed into a picturesque region of farmhouses and ancient homesteads; down a steep hill which gave us another view of the splendid country we had

* Camden's *Britannia*.

† Dryden's *Virgil*.

crossed before, and "up hill and down dale," about three miles, brought us back to the Goffe's Oak again. Tea,—Oh, how delicious! eggs, fresh butter,—butcher's meat not to be got. Arranged botanical specimens, and "between whiles," peeped in at the basketful of jet Blackberries, and thought of flour and suet, and how long a pudding takes to boil. Emerson, nothing better in the world of literature, after a green ramble,—solemn, thoughtful, filled to overflowing with rich green images and wooded sanctuaries of primitive thought, which suit the mind after its powers have been allowed to expand in converse with the bladed grass and honeysuckles. Warm brandy and water, rather weak, eases the rigidity of limb, and soothes the body, which the sun has fevered; and then, sleep is indeed a "comfortable bird;" and if not a "Key to golden Palaces," at least a grand restorative for another day amongst the Blackberries.

Six days pass, and each seems more beautiful than its predecessor, till warned of anxieties and cares, and knowing that commercial interests permit us not without stint to pluck Blackberries for ourselves, we take train, and are once more in a region not of Blackberries, but black bricks and cold stones and colder hearts, amid

The weariness, the fever, and the fret,
Here, where men sit and hear each other groan;
Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last grey hairs,
Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies;
Where but to think is to be full of sorrow
And leaden-eyed despairs;
Where beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,
Or new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow.

There's the bell for dinner! I know there's a Blackberry and damson pie in the oven; if I could give a bit to poor Keats, it would make him sing a more cheerly song; but as I cannot, let me leave this melancholy prosing, and while sprinkling sugar in the purple juice, shout the "Land of Blackberries for ever!"



THE SOUL OF SONG.

From harmony, from heavenly harmony,
This universal frame began :
From harmony to harmony
Through all the compass of the notes it ran,
The diapason closing full in man.

DRYDEN.

PHILOSOPHERS tell us that light, heat, and sound, are but the various effects of an agitated or vibrating medium. That a certain number of one kind of vibrations in a given time produce some definite ray of colour; while a definite number of some other kind give birth to a peculiar sound. Sounds thus produced by vibrating currents of air may be either noises or musical tones; the distinction being dependent entirely on the nature and number of the vibrations. A mere noise is produced by vibrations which have no mathematical proportion one to the other: musical tones result from vibrations which bear mathematical analysis; each separate tone having its specific number of vibrations, and bearing musical and numerical relation to all other musical tones. Inasmuch as red, blue, or yellow light are the productions of waves in the thin ether, so are all sounds, whether of the dear human voice or the dread "rattling thunder," but effects referable to rippings or wavings of the air. So far, sound is but a simple result of natural causes,—a plain prose fact. But as the grey and brown tints of the earth are lifted out of the region of prose into that of poetry by the gay hues of flowers, so is human speech, and all other sounds, lifted out of the dead level of mere utility into a region of life by a poetry which asserts itself in song. God has so willed it that while the world brings forth bread for the body, it shall bring forth beauty for the soul. We prize the corn because it nourisheth; we love the fresh green of the waving wheat because it is a thing of beauty. Words are instruments of power, and among the highest in the list of mere utilities; but when the jangle of commerce ceases, and the tender utterance of sympathy begins, how poor the words of the mind, how rich the music of the heart! Nature ever climbs up towards the spiritual; she never ceases with use, she must have

beauty ; and so she gives man a capacity for the appreciation of harmonious vibrations ; and speech dies out—as if in shame at its own weakness—where the expression of the soul begins. Simple in its source,—simple in its history, is this fact ; yet how deep it lies in the unity of this circle of the affections,—how closely bound up with the hopes and joys of living men,—how suggestive of spiritual life and high aspiration,—how strong a link in the chain of our destinies. The most ethereal, and at the same time the most vague musical expressions, stand as high above verse, as verse—the connecting link between conversation and melody—does above mere prosy talking. We remember the air of an old song long after we have forgotten the words. We may sit unmoved during the recital of the finest verses ; but the moment the harper's fingers sweep the strings, the melody rouses us to a fine fanaticism. The song was body before,—it is soul now ; its harmonies are complete ; and to every march of the melody the heart-strings throb responsive. Nature is double all through ;—body and soul, matter and spirit, as if the universe were a repeated marriage of the two elements. To the fertility of the fields is added beauty of tint, and form, and colour : the brown soil has a soul, and that soul is the flower, which would exist in vain were there no other souls to make common cause with its life and history. To man—the prose of the world—is added woman, its poetry.

These many spirits of the world seem made for man. The rainbow may span the heavens ; but unless seen by man, its arches have been built in vain. When it bridges over the unpopulated desert, it is but a thousand drops of rain, which the green leaves drink in without knowing of their prismatic beauty ; but when it embraces the corn ridge and the village, a thousand loving eyes look up, and angels are seen treading it as a pathway between the heaven and the earth. Hence, knowing its mission, the rainbow only visits spots where human souls abide. It is for the soul of man that all these many souls are born, and the soul of song as truly so as any. Where is the music of nature so rich as on the skirts of cultivated districts, where flowery gardens feed innumerable humming bees, and thick bosses of thatch shelter the trusting robin ! It is a fact, that in the deep forest the birds that sing are few ; and the more lonely the spot, the more hoarse and dissonant the voices of the creatures. Everywhere the dear birds hover and flit on hasty wing ; but only near the dwelling of man hover those whose song is sweetest : in his garden they take

shelter and bring up their young ; in the close copse or mossy orchard they cower from the noonday heat ; and return again and again, in spite of the persecutions they meet with at his hands, to heighten his enjoyments, to cheer his social hours, and renew the sentiments of past delight. In the lonely mere, and over the dark moorland, hover many birds, but they are such as only hoot and scream ; and where the wild waves play together fly seabirds, whose only language is a dismal shriek.

Nature pushes up towards the region of poetry in sound as she does in colour. As she weaves rainbows from the fragments of a falling cloud, so she struggles to weave music from every voice of animate and inanimate things. The wind howls in the November branches, but sings amid the shrubby foliage of June ; the rivulet makes a whizzing sound while creeping through the matted sedge, but laughs like a merry maiden when it sparkles among the yellow pebbles, and tinkles like a bell when it beats upon a fallen rock.

It is because music stands above all the utilities of sound,—because it appeals to the sentiments of men, because it is soul claiming kindred with soul, that man has loved it first among the spiritual possessions of the world, and has sought in its voice an answer to his longings for the good and fair. Nowhere upon the face of all the world is to be found a people in whose hearts music has not a welcome. The rude Indian stands upon the shelly beach and listens in love to the singing of the waves. He suspends the hollow shell upon the delicate fibre of the palm, and strikes it with his hand, that it may give forth song. He fashions the marsh reed or the stem of grass into a flute, and enchants his listening children with its voice. And when the toils of the chase are done, he gathers together his fellow huntsmen, and in the purple of the evening air they sing together their songs of joy.

It was the consciousness of union between the soul of man and the soul of song which begot those lovely conceits of antiquity which represented nature as a musical or rhythmic harmony. Plato said, the soul of man was itself a harmony, and had its nearest sympathies in music. Bolder still was the sage of Samos, when he said that the orbs of heaven were so harmonious in their motions that it must be accompanied by ravishing songs,—that the worlds warble in their ceaseless march, while the blue deeps beat back the chorus and repeat the echo of their psalms.

All fables, when understood, become facts. Orpheus is no fable; he is the poet skilled in harmony whom the ages honour with the attributes of divinity in remembrance of the solace which men found in his songs. The Orphic hymns are lost, but fragments of his legendary life remain to testify how closely men cling to the remembrance of pleasure. When Orpheus bewailed the death of his wife Euridyce, the sweet sound of his lyre caused a forest of elms to spring up, and the charm of his harp was so great that the woods nodded, the brown rocks broke their bonds and marched entranced towards him. That the extravagance is only superficial, witness the repeated references of poets, who return again and again to these lovely legends because there is a truth beneath them which is universal:—

Therefore the poet

Did feign that Orpheus drew trees, stones, and floods;
Since naught so stockish, hard, and full of rage,
But music for the time doth change his nature.

The universal poet saw the breadth of the myth, and added:—

The man that hath no music in himself,
Nor is not moved with concord of sweet sounds;
The motions of his spirit are dull as night,
Is fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils;
And his affections dark as Erebus.

SHAKSPERE.

The spirit of the world was young when music was made the hand-maid of religion; and it still affords a glimpse of that antiquity to know that deeds of heroism and valour were sanctified in song, and that music completed the glory of the inauguration and the festival. Whether at the Olympic, Pythian, Nemean, and Isthmian games, or at the victories of Romulus, 750 years before Christ, when the army, horse and foot, followed the chariot of the conqueror, hymning their gods in songs of their country; or whether at the marriage feast or the funeral prayer, the charm of music still predominates,—interweaves itself with the fate and circumstance of man, and creeps into his heart like a sunbird seeking for a home. It is this power which rouses a rude peasantry from the lethargy of serfdom to repossess themselves of liberties long lost, under the impulse of their national melodies. The effect produced on the Swiss soldiers, when in the service of the French, by an ancient air of the *Rannes des Vaches*, was so powerful that it was forbidden to be played, so forcibly did it remind the men

of the mountainous homes which they had left, and of the hearts which were there beating and weeping for them.

National song, of all other, holds a powerful sway over the minds of those in whom it awakens thoughts of fatherland and freedom. What would be the poetry of any nation, or any age, if robbed of the spirit of its song? What would be left of Scottish character if the ballads of the Caledonian bards were swept away; if the harps of the minstrels perished with the fingers that first swept them? The song that cheered the shepherd boy while tending his sheep, comes back to him in the hour of oppression and danger; and even upon the battlefield, that melody calls up the moors and mountains of his native land; the wild woods and the streams come back, and the breezy freshness of the heather fans his cheek again, as he marches with a firm step and a nervous arm to win his liberty or die. It is said that he who writes the songs of a nation may at the same time predict its history, for patriotism has ever burned the brighter when music fanned the flame, and the human breast has ever throbbed with a holier devotion when the soul of song was stirring at the heart-strings.

The same tender emotions which move the camel-driver to sing to his camel, as he shares with the patient brute his dates and barley-bread, and then ceases in his song to hear the tinkling of the bells upon the desert sand, animated the harper in the olden times when he poured forth his wild songs to nerve the chieftain's arm for battle. No music is there like the human voice: harmony may flow from trembling strings; but the soul of song dwells sweetest on the human lips. It was in musical sentences that Pythagoras uttered those wonderful spondees by which he could suddenly pacify a man that was in a violent transport of anger; and in the simple ballad sung to-day at the fireside, the heart finds one of its sweetest consolations, and learns a sympathy which for ever links it in memory with home. Virgil knew the value and the beauty of the voice when he made Silenus sing of the Epicurean birthday, and in a strain so thrilling that

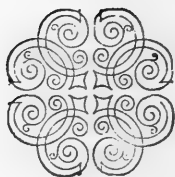
Tripping satyrs crowded to the song;
And sylvan fawns, and savage beasts advanced,
And nodding forests to the numbers danced.

And there are but few who could sit listless while the lips of beauty were uttering the language of a tender ballad—a ballad of the heart, woven of home joys and sorrows—not the jingle of a heartless and

abandoned fancy. Oh, the magic of that tender touch!—the thrill of that utterance of soul for soul—the glorious circle of associations kindled into being by the music of those household words by which our mothers sang us to sleep,—by which our sweethearts beguiled the evenings of our wooing, and by which, as age and trouble gather around us, we hope to have for solace in the downward path! The finishing touch—the completion of the household circle—is this fireside song; enjoyed but once, it is remembered for ever, and as a frequent pastime it is the purest and most refining antidote to the gilded allurements of gaiety and fashion. Picture the Christmas group sitting round the hearth of blazing logs, where the flames leap up, and up, and flash their ruddy radiance on the ruddier walls, playing in strange sparkles and gold drops on the old cornices, and leaving a strange Christmas light upon every happy face assembled there. The song is all that is needed to complete their joy, and that scene, completed by the fireside song, becomes a memory to each one there which none of the detergent vanities of the world will ever annihilate. There can be no limit to the moral beauty of this. Everything which refines the home, which makes it attractive, which endears it by spells and enchantments, and words of love, and songs of gladness, has an effect which abides through life, and gives force and reality to the domestic character, and makes home a haven of refuge from the storms and whirlwinds of the world. Who, but the most abandoned and outcast, can for a moment picture such a scene without calling up from his own circle of associations a hundred memories of dear ones that have passed away,—of others that still linger—linger as if only to love—the joys of the world having all passed from them; and of others yet in the bloom and flush of life, stepping one by one into the circles of manhood and womanhood, to be cheered by-and-bye with the prattle and the songs of their own babes, and to know how truly home is home when cheered by the breath of song.

The object of the ballad is to stir the feelings by a gentle appeal, and to lift the heart into its highest region of sympathy and moral beauty, by the blending into one harmonious whole of the simple things around it. *The Old Arm-chair*; *Oh, Nannie*; and the *Evening Bells*, have kindled more pure aspirations and left dearer memories behind than all the *morceaux* of the French and Italian masters that ever were introduced into the boudoir. The ballad is essentially the song of home; its appeals are direct, and it plays upon the emotions

by a rhyming of the things that are near and dear to us. Happy the child whose first sleep is softened by a mother's song; happy the mother who sings her child to sleep! Happy the home where music supplants the attractions of the tavern and the gambling-table; happy the bride who loves the wedding bells for their own sake, and mingles with the first cares of the wife a song to win her husband's kisses—for "domestic happiness is of that quiet nature which the heart enjoys but the tongue boasts not,—it is like that still music which the ancients supposed is going on above—not the less sweet for its making no noise in the ears of this world."



SUGGESTIONS OF A BROOMSTICK.

I am sent with broome before
To sweep the dust behind the doore,
MID. N. DREAM.

SUNSHINE prosper thee, sweet lady-birch ! Softest of dews and holiest of showers fall upon thy tasselled sprays and trembling foliage, and ruddiest of morning glances break upon thy silver bark ! And thou, bonny broom, hiding thyself in the moorland hollows, how many belted bees have visited thy ringlets since the spring began ? how many wanderers hath thy perfume solaced ? over how many aching heads hast thou shook thy rushy branches, hushing the lone wayfarer into Elysian dreams as he lay on the pliant moss beneath thee ? It is in the greenest of glens and the mossiest of woody nooks that broomstuffs flourish,—on the healthiest of wild moorlands that the bonny broom comes to birth. Blue and golden flowers watch over them in infancy, and bearded oaks bend above their lusty youth. A broomstick ! Are “ proper people ” shocked at the suggestion—to them, of the vileness and scullery refuse which the broom is used to sweep away ? no matter,—what is mere fuel to them shall be philosophy to us ; and with the reverent stump of a superannuated besom before us, we will let the caprice have its course, and see for once what suggestions may come from a broomstick.

Were you ever young ?—of course you were, and made your first triumph before family friends by trotting, full speed, into the midst of little Jemima’s muslin friends astride a broomstick, and had at least a hundred kisses from dear old Granny, who sat in the corner, and vowed it was vulgar to trot broomsticks in doors, while she secretly loved you all the more for it. There, too, was the old Captain, in his skull-cap, and barnacles, and purple nose, who gloried in a romp, and yet, for fear of offending the young ladies, suffered innumerable pangs when he said, “ Charley, you’re a naughty boy, sir ! ” Well, that time has gone into the land of memory, and the broomstick is the only talisman to summon its pictures to the present.

———— From the age
 That children tread the worldly stage,
 Broomstaff, or poker, they bestride,
 And round the parlour love to ride.

PRIOR.

The broomstick went the way of all toys,—petted to day, burnt to-morrow; and to avenge the degradation inflicted upon it then, its ghost came back to us at school, inflicting stripes, and, in the compound of foolscap and pickled birch, torturing the affections as well as the flesh, and making youth's season of song and sunshine one of wailings and tears. The pickled birch—how barbarous in itself, and still more barbarous in its frequent and untimed use, marking more the phases of the teacher's temper than the dulness of the pupil's mind. Stupid old doctrine! to imagine that what the mind was incapable of grasping could be beaten into the body,—that to make an impression on the memory blood must trickle from the skin. Well, that time has past also, and memory seems to hallow even those barbarities; and we catch sight of the modern cane, so sparingly used by men who have adopted love as an element of education in the place of the old sottish spite,—when we see that, we sometimes imagine that things have sadly degenerated since we went to school, for to us *now* the pickled birch is a thing of poetry, if it be the poetry of pain, while the cane is mere prose, and suggestive of sugar candy at the highest. But the birch has its moral for after life,—

———— As fond fathers,
 Having bound up the threatening twigs of birch,
 Onely to sticke it in their children's sight
 For terror, not to use; in time the rod,
 More mocked than feared.

MEASURE FOR MEASURE.

It is a serious question how far principle actuates us to duty rather than fear of consequences. We are, perhaps, little better than school-boys, and fear the moral birch of the world, and the stripes of conscience, in more cases than we love its tasks and burdens:—

But though no more his brow severe, nor dread
 Of birchen sceptre awes my riper age,
 A sterner tyrant rises to my view,
 With deadlier weapon armed.

JAGO, *Edge Hill. b. iii.*

But leaving private experience, which ever lacks largeness and universality, let us take this crippled stump, worn as it is to a mere shadow in the service of that which is next to godliness. It was once a comely, upright, lusty broom, with a stout birchen body, and a green bushy head ; and though ever standing with its one leg in the air, yet always ready to be useful, and run the risk of apoplexy for the service of a good cause. Its wretched stump, now reduced to the last extremity of vegetable suffering, was, in time gone by, a waving branch of lady-birch, and was clothed in silver bark, and tasselled over with delicate twigs and little fairy leaves. When spring came, it danced to and fro in the sunlight, and its shadow glided up and down the white ledges of the rocks, over which its pensile sprays peeped to see the water trickle down the ravine. Glorious was the lady-birch at any season ; glorious, too, the hale green broom ; the one gleaming in the morning sun, where the wood-pigeon built her nest, the other dressing the stony moor with yellow livery, and both living to make the world more beautiful. It is this birch * which supplies the best of wood for broomsticks, and whose young feathery branches often take the place of the green broom in the completion of the besom. In the Highlands they use it for tanning, for dyeing wool yellow ; its bark supplies Highland candles and Norway bread ; its wood, charcoal and printers' ink ; its leaves, fodder for horses, kine, sheep, and goats ; and its seed, food for that pretty songster of the wood, the aberdevine. The sap of the birch makes the birch-wine of English housewifery, of which those who know how to make it are not a little proud:—

And though she boasts no charms divine,
Yet she can make and serve birch-wine.

WARTON.

It will flourish in English woods, and there is not a wood worth rambling in which has not many of these light, fairy-creatures, pencilling the sky with their trembling spidery network of leaves and branches. It was this same birch from which the Gauls extracted bitumen, and which the Russians now use to prepare the celebrated Russian leather ; which the carpenter finds best of all wood for rafters, ploughs, spades, and carts ; which the Highland peasants use for har-

* BIRCH—Celt. *Betu* ; A. S., *birc* ; Dutch, *berke* ; German, *berkan*, *birchenbaum* ; Fr., *bouleau* ; Ital. *betulla*. Pliny, I. 16, c. 18, speaks of the *mirabilis candor* of the birch. "It showeth wonderful white," says Holland.

ness, ropes, and basket-work; and with which they symbolize, under the name of *Betu* or *am beatha*, the clan of the Buchanans. It is the same birch as that from which our poor imbecile stump was cut, which forms the great forests of the North; which climbs up rugged mountain-sides, to peep over the precipices, and fling the light of vegetable grace and beauty over the giant solitudes of snow. It is the same birch which fills us with forest lore when we see its silvery stem towering up, straight as an arrow, to the sky, and waving its plumes of pensile beauty in the sunlight; which listens to the liquid whistle of the early thrush, and the full melody of sunny May; and which shelters the robin and the blackbird with its boughs—

A thing of beauty is a joy for ever—

a broomstick, then, shall be a joy to us.

The bonny broom, *

Yellow and bright as bullion unalloyed,
Her blossoms;

used by the good housewives of old to brush the crumbs from the dressing-board, and the soiled sand from the kitchen floor, is no less dear for its touches of memory, and pictures of green imagery, than the lady-birch. It grows on the moorland, where there is no shelter from the blast of winter or the fierce heat of summer; where drought, and swamp, and keenest frost have each unmitigated vigour, and where the earth lies flat beneath the blue sky, as if it had fallen prostrate, and had no friend but the broom to cover it with garments. It is on the dreary waste where the red deer loves to wander, and the ptarmigan finds a home, that the bonny broom sprinkles its round tufts of green, fresh as infancy amid the fiercest frost,—golden as day-break through the laughing summer. There it creeps up and down the hills, and amid the wild forest dells, far away from the haunts of men, in company of creeping things, of gaps of sunshine and of passing shadows.

There lacked no floure to my dome,
Ne not so much as floure of brome.

CHAUCER.

* BROOM—A. S. *brom*; Ger. *besen*; D. *berem*, from D. *bremmen*, because the seeds when ripe, burst from the pods with considerable noise. Ital. *scope garnate*; Sp. *escobas*; Rus. *metlii*.

In yonder greenwood blows the broom ;
 Shepherds, we'll trust our flocks to stray,—
 Court Nature in her sweetest bloom,
 And steal from Care one summer day.*

It was the rushy branches of the broom which supplied the old Greeks with ropes and cordage ; † which now provides the “simple sheep” with the best of food, the cattle with the best of litter, the cottager with the best of thatch,—

(He made carpenters to make the houses and lodgynges of great tymbre, and set the houses like stretes, and covered them with rede and brome, so that it was lyke a lyttel towne.—FROISSART.)—

and the wild bee with the most delicious honey. It is the bonny broom which serves us as well whether we cut its tufts for sweeping, for tanning leather, or for the manufacture of coarse cloth ; which is almost as useful as hops in brewing ; which furnishes a wood capable of the most exquisite polish ; which, in its ashes, gives a pure alkali, and in its pods and blossoms, perfume and medicine,—Drs. Cullen and Mead both esteemed the broom in cases of dropsy.

E'en humble broom and osiers have their use,
 And shade for sheep and food for flocks produce.

It was the bonny broom which the Scottish clan of the Forbes wore in their bonnets when they wished to arouse the heroism of their chieftain, and which, in their Gaelic dialect, they called *bealadh*, in token of its beauty. It was this very broom from which the long line of Plantagenets took their name, and which to the last they wore on their helmets, crests, and family seal. It was thus:—Fulke, Earl of Anjou, having committed a crime, was enjoined by a holy father of the church, to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land by way of penance. He went, habited in lowly attire, with a sprig of broom in his hat to denote his humility. The expiation finished, he adopted the name of Plantagenet, from *Planta* and *Genista*, ‡ the old name of the broom, and transmitted this to his princely descendants.* As an

* LANGHORNE. *The Wilding and the Broom.*

† *Spartium*, from ΣΠΑΣΤΟΝ cordage. *Genista spartium* has thick-set, rush-like twigs, very tough and fibrous.

‡ GENISTA.—The Celt implies *small bush* ; or from *genu*, a *knee*, from the bending of the twigs ; or *geno*, to *produce*, on account of its abundance.

* Sandford's Genealogical History.

emblem of humility, too, it was worn by St. Louis, in 1234, on the occasion of his marriage with Margaret, eldest daughter of Raymond Berengarius, Count of Provence, and a new order of knights was instituted to commemorate the event. The motto of the order was "Exaltat humiles," and the collar of the order was made up of the flowers and seed-pods of the common broom, enamelled and intermixed with fleur-de-lys of gold. This *Ordre de la Geneste*, or Order of the Broom, continued till the death of Charles the Fifth.

Though the feeblest thing that nature forms,
 A frail and perishing flower art thou;
 Yet thy race has survived a thousand storms
 That have laid the monarch and warrior low.
 The storied urn may be crumbled to dust,
 And Time may the marble bust deface;
 But thou wilt be faithful and firm to thy trust,—
 The memorial-flower of a princely race.

Then hail to thee, fair Broomstick! herald of a thousand years, memorial of human trials, triumphs, and sufferings. Abide with us, oh tough and well-tried friend; and now, too feeble for thy office of cleanliness, hint to us of the old Roman pageant, when the *noblesse* of Rome assembled, and the officers swept the hall with a green broom affixed to a sturdy broomstick. That was the honour paid by Roman patricians to intellect, energy, and virtue, which, however humble in their origin, had an equal chance with wealth and ancestral title in sharing the offices and honours of the state. The broom was as conscious of its dignity as the newly-elected councillors just lifted from the ranks of the people; and the moment its green and flowerless branches touched the floor of the assembly, it broke into golden blossoms, a mute symbol of the fertility of virtue.† Hail to thee! for all the legends of old Time thou bringest us, from the state processions of Rome down to the hanging of a broom at the door of a Russian maiden pining for a lover. The broomstick was the chosen Pegasus of the midnight hags, when, gliding like bats through the midnight,

† This story is related by Marcellinus Ammianus. The custom of publicly sweeping the hall on occasion of those assemblies was maintained for a long period. The verberna and sagmina were carried by the Roman *fetiales* instead of the caduceus, as emblems of peace.

they laid plots and counterplots to involve poor human nature in the sufferings of superstition :—

Do not strange matrons mount on high,
And switch their broomsticks through the sky,—
Ride post o'er hills, and woods, and seas,
From Thule to the Hesperides ? *

Verily they do; but they are only the embodied sins of men-consciences, which have taken shape and come back again and again to stick pins in sinners' sides; stifle the babe which has been neglected by a harsh mother; fling cattle which want tending into bogs which ought to have been drained; spoil milk which has been left by sluttish dairy-maids; and jabber, scoff, and torture men in the reflected images of their own wickedness. Why always in the night? why ever amid

The dark sublime of extra-natural scenes?
The vulgar magic's puerile rite demeans;
Where hags their cauldrons, fraught with toads, prepare,
Or glide on broomsticks through the midnight air? †

Why, but that all evil spirits are but human vices riding on the broomsticks of memory, and compounding in the cauldron of remorse, the toads and snakes of retribution; The diseased mind peoples the night with hags and witches, and influences dire, as excuses—lame as they are—for its own wickedness and folly, which dare not face the daylight.

Some strange old customs suggest themselves in connection with broomsticks. There is the salutation of the broom, which, like the throwing of old shoes for luck, has a smack of poetry in it, and recalls Arbuthnot's remark on the brooming of servants, who "if they came into the best apartment to set anything in order were saluted with a broom." The hanging out of the broom at the mast-heads of ships offered for sale, originated from that period of our history when the Dutch admiral, Van Tromp, with his fleet, appeared on our coasts in hostility against England; and to indicate that he would sweep the English navy from the seas, hoisted a broom at the mast-head of his ship. To repel this insolence the English admiral hoisted a horse-whip, equally indicative of his intention to chastise the Dutchman.

* Somerville—*Epistle to Allan Ramsey*.

† Amwell Scott—*On Painting*.

The pennant, which the horsewhip symbolized, has ever since been the distinguishing mark of English ships of war.* The custom of hanging out the broom has another meaning in Russia; there it is the custom in the villages for parents who have marriageable and unbetrothed daughters to hoist a broom over the cottage doorway, that the swains may know where to seek for virgins.

Few associations of the broomstick are more interesting than those of the poor Flanders' peasantry, who a few years ago came to this country in vast numbers to penetrate into every nook and corner of every town in the land with the cry, "Buy a broom!" There are few of them left, and those few have modern airs and modern dress, which separate them entirely from the upright, short-coated, wooden-featured "Buy-a-brooms" of our infancy. We well remember the favourite ditty, sung in a plaintive voice at the parlour window, or on the doorstep,—

A large one for a lady,
A small one for a baby,
Come buy my pretty lady,
Come buy of me a broom,—

which touched many a heart, and secured for the singer many a basin of warm soup and lapful of kitchen-pieces, besides some halfpence for the immortal "brooms." In the most squalid wretchedness, confined within the precincts of Whitechapel and Petticoat Lane, these modest broom-merchants took up their abode, to sally forth every morning into the genteel squares and by-streets of London, having a bobbing curtsy ready the moment a face was seen at a window, and a song at the first appearance of a child. William Hone published an engraving of them in his inimitable "Year Book," with the following doggerel of his own composition attached to the print:—

These poor "Buy-a-broom" girls exactly dress now
As Hollar etched such girls two centuries ago;
All formal and stiff, with legs only at ease,—
Yet pray, judge for yourself; and don't if you please,
Like Matthews's "Chyle," in his Monolo-play,
Cry "*The Every-Day Book* is quite *right*, I dare say."
But ask for the print at old shops (they'll show it),
And look at it "with your own eyes," and you'll *know* it.

We took Hone's advice, and found they *wouldn't* "show it" at the

print shops, and so waited for an opportunity to see it at the British Museum, and then were satisfied as to the identity hinted at by Hone. Was ever dress so comical? the hair skewered into an immense tight knob, and covered with a cap too small for an infant, and tied under the chin; the body as unbending as an oak tree, and apparently encased in metal clothing set out in formal flutes, like a large bee-hive or cone of carpentry; and the grey legs,—oh, for Bloomer trowsers to hide such! our veritable broomstick is more flexible. But they were poor and suffered much; and though most comical illustrations of the Flemish costume, there was always something sad about them as they curtsied at the windows just before dinner time, and sniffed the odour of the kitchen with a relish which told too plainly of their condition.

Here our broomstick would have told its story, but that its fallen state is so suggestive of the fate of man that we should lose the very pith and marrow of its teachings were we to lay down our pen without deducing this moral epilogue. The history of a broomstick is a fit emblem of the history of man; for its green vigour when flourishing in the woods, and its neglected and enfeebled state after a life of good services, are exact counterparts of the sunny freshness of early life and the imbecilities of age. The most useful labourers in the van of progress, those who sweep away the abuses of society, are not they who reap the largest rewards: poets, philosophers, and philanthropists fall friendless and penniless into old age, and, like worn out broomsticks, are cast aside and forgotten; while the fawning and hypocritical too often feather their nests snugly, and retire from a world which they have defiled, into a retirement which laughs nobler souls to scorn. “When I beheld this,” says Dean Swift, “I sighed, and said within myself, ‘Surely mortal man is a broomstick.’” Nature sent him into the world strong and lusty, in a thriving condition, wearing his own hair upon his head,—the proper branches of this reasoning vegetable,—till the axe of intemperance has lopt off his green boughs, and left him a withered trunk. . . . But now, should this our *broomstick* pretend to enter the scene, proud of those birchen spoils it never bore, and all covered with dust, though the sweepings of the finest lady’s chamber, we should be apt to ridicule and despise its vanity, partial judges that we are of our own excellencies and other men’s faults. . . . But a *broomstick*, perhaps you’ll say, is an emblem of a tree standing on its head: and, pray,

what is man but a topsy-turvy creature,—his animal faculties perpetually a cock-horse and rational ; his head where his heels should be, grovelling on the earth ? ” * Alack and alas ! most witty of mad-men, most lunatic of wits, man is little better than a broomstick ; his faculties are half the while upon a level with the earth ; with an upright attitude he persists in crawling, or boldly flings his heels in air, and dies head-downward from plethora. If he be never worse than a broomstick it will be well : he will then be joyous in his youth, and keep company with green things and the sweet voices of Nature ; if he then live to sweep the world, and brush before him all moral garbage, “ men-slugs and human serpentry,” he shall perhaps have a better fate than to feed the flames when his work be done.

* A Meditation upon a Broomstick and Somewhat Beside, by the same Author. *Utile dulci*. London, printed for E. Curll, at the Dial and Bible, against St. Dunstan's Church, in Fleet Street, and sold by F. Harding, at the Post Office in St. Martin's Lane. 1710. Price 6d.



THE POETRY OF CHEMISTRY.

There's not one atom of yon earth but once was living man,
Nor the minutest drop, that hangeth in its thinnest cloud,
But flowed in human veins.

SHELLEY.

So pass and change the elements of the world. So separate and combine, so decay and revivify, so come and go the creatures of the earth and air, and in due time all the particles of the rounded world pass through the life current of the human heart. Nature is a great laboratory, a necromantic palace of mutation. Yet out of all this passing and repassing, this flitting and fading of her dead and living children, she still preserves the old familiar face, and looks upon us with the same sweet mother's smile which gladdened the hearts of the old thinkers, and cheered the builders of the ancient temples. Nature has but a few simple materials, and neither crucible nor alembic in which to elaborate her new forms, and yet with this poverty of means does she trick out all the world in scenes of delicious beauty, and hedge round the waking thoughts of men with wonder upon wonder. "The whole code of her laws may be written on the thumb-nail, or the signet of a ring. The whirling bubble on the surface of a brook admits us to the secret of the mechanics of the sky. Every shell on the beach is a key to it. A little water made to rotate in a cup explains the formation of the simpler shells; the addition of matter from year to year, arrives at last at the most complex forms; and yet so poor is nature with all her craft, that, from the beginning to the end of the universe, she has but one stuff—but one stuff with its two ends, to serve up all her dream-like variety. Compound it how she will, star, sand, fire, water, tree, man, it is still one stuff, and betrays the same properties." *

When men woke up from barbarism and night, and began to contemplate the beauty of the world, they saw that amid the multiplicity

* Emerson's Essays, Second Series, p. 121.

of colours and of forms, and in the endless metamorphoses of things around them, whether they looked upon the granite peaks piercing the blue heaven with their hoary pinnacles; the wild sea with its midnight moans and summer laughter; the blue heaven with its storms and starlight beauty; or the green earth with its clustering woods and waving grasses, blossoming all over from pole to pole with a garment of living verdure;—still the same invisible forces were at work, weaving all things in a web of unity, and connecting the most incongruous things together. Hence, in their mystic worship, and in the poetic utterances of their untamed hearts, they pictured nature under the various forms of Buddha, Vishnu, Osiris, Proteus, and Pan; all of them symbols of the same thought, and representing the creative power which for ever and ever transmits one form into another, and evokes from corruption and death the creatures of a new creation. The story of the Phoenix is the story of the world, and as one form crumbles into ashes, another starts from its dust, to continue the chain of beauty, and push on the series of utilities.

Where is the dust that has not been alive?
The spade, the plough, disturb our ancestors,
From human mould we reap our daily bread;
The globe around earth's hollow surface shakes,
And is the ceiling of her sleeping sons:
O'er devastation we blind revels keep;
Whole buried towns support the dancer's heel.

YOUNG.

Of the sixty simple elements to which all the varieties of dead and living matter are reducible, some fifteen or twenty play the chief parts in the chemistry of the world. All the phenomena which take place around us, whether it be the upheaval of volcanic masses, or the floating of a gossamer in the summer air; the sweeping hurricane which tears up forests by the roots, or the blushing promise of the spring's first flowers; the forked lightning, and the tramping thunder which shakes heaven with deep pulsations, or the golden belts upon the body of the bee, and the fairy song he chants among the flowers; the trickling of molten metals into the fissures of the earth, or the passage of an idea through the brain of man; are dependent upon the separation and recombination of various of these elementary principles; without the movements and metamorphoses of which, the whole world would be one scene of darkness and desolation. Chemical laws

operate upon the minute atoms of which bodies are composed ; and as all the atoms of matter have a spherical or globular form, the attractions and repulsions of atomic particles exhibit a close analogy to the attractions and repulsions of the worlds. It is possible, indeed, that there is but one attraction and one chemical law, and the phenomenon of an atom may be repeated in the dewdrop, in the bubble on the stream, and in the floating world. There is more poetry in the alembic and the test tube than the worldly dream about.

In one direction the earnest workers are probing the secrets of nature, and unravelling one by one the mystic threads that run through all her fabrications; and in another, poet-minds are arranging and diffusing the facts which the former have made known, that all the world may become inheritors of the new possession, and dwell with increased joy on the contemplation of these new treasures of the Almighty's handiwork.*

If we trace back the history of our world into those remote eras of which the early rocks are records, we shall discover that the same chemical laws were operating then which control the changes of matter now. At one period the earth was a huge mass of fiery fluid, which, radiating or throwing off heat into space, gradually cooled, and became surrounded with a solid crust, entombing within itself a chaos of intensely heated materials, which now assert their existence in the shock of the earthquake, and the awful outbreaks of volcanic fires. In later ages, when the crust had cooled still more, and the atmosphere let fall its showers, the still heated surface, hissing and roaring with the contact of the flood, was rent into enormous blocks, and dreadful abysses; which still remain all over the world, and form the wondrous monuments of an age of great convulsions. Later still the seas gathered together, the rocky masses were powdered into dust by the delicate fingers of the dew and the shower, the green herbs sprang up, and the monsters of the slimy deep appeared in obedience to the Creator's fiat, and the whole earth became a home of beauty in obedience to chemical law. The ceaseless play of the elements, and the

* The Chemistry of the Seasons. By J. Griffiths, Author of the Chemistry of the Four Elements, Chemical Lecturer to the Royal Family. London: John Churchill.

Chemistry, as Exemplifying the Wisdom and Beneficence of God. By George Fownes. Ibid.

mutations of the atoms had built up the whole into one gorgeous scerie of luxuriousness; and man was awakened into being to render the whole subservient to his wishes, and by tracing out the harmonies of the natural world, to arrive at a more exalted knowledge of his maker.

The atom of charcoal which floated in the corrupt atmosphere of the old volcanic ages, was absorbed into the leaf of a fern when the valleys became green and luxuriant; and there, in its proper place, it received the sunlight and the dew, aiding to fling back to heaven a reflection of heaven's gold; and at the same time to build the tough fibre of the plant. That same atom was consigned to the tomb when the waters submerged the jungled valleys. It had lain there thousands of years, and a month since was brought into the light again, imbedded in a block of coal. It shall be consumed to warm our dwelling, cook our food, and make more ruddy and cheerful the hearth whereon our children play: it shall combine with a portion of the invisible atmosphere, ascend upward as a curling wreath to revel in a mazy dance high up in the blue ether; shall reach earth again, and be entrapped in the embrace of a flower: shall live in velvet beauty on the cheek of the apricot; shall pass into the human body, giving enjoyment to the palate, and health to the blood; shall circulate in the delicate tissues of the brain; and aid, by entering into some new combination, in educing the thoughts which are now being uttered by the pen. It is but an atom of charcoal, it may dwell one moment in a stagnant ditch, and the next be flushing on the lip of beauty; it may now be a component of a limestone rock, and the next an ingredient in a field of potatoes; it may slumber for a thousand years without undergoing a single change, and the next hour pass through a thousand; and after all, it is only an atom of charcoal, and occupies only its own place wherever it may be.

It is from the unceasing interchange of the particles of matter that the living lustre of the world is born; it is the separation of one atom of water from one atom of starch which gives rise to the formation of sugar; and to this change, produced by the mutual influences of warmth and moisture, the germination of all seeds is due, and hence the continuance of vegetation. Neither the oaks of the forest, nor the grasses of the field, could ever have burst into their green beauty but for this simple change in the elements of their seeds.* The

* Seeds contain a large quantity of starch, a material best of all suited to

maltster takes advantage of this, to produce that delicate flavour in the barley, which, when combined with the intoxicating product of a second change in the sugar itself, has proved the source of physical suffering and social misery to millions.

If the imaginings of the early world were brilliant and startling, the facts of modern chemists are imbued with a poetry more lofty still, while they have for their basis the solid ground of truth, and stand separated by a wide gulf from the phantasies of fiction. What oriental fiction of aerial temples, or rainbow daughters of the sky, can for a moment be compared with the simple chemistry of the atmosphere, or the rainbows themselves? This soft, universal, azure medium in which the round world swings, and which holds the clouds in its arms, letting them fall drop by drop in fatness to the earth, or that spanning archway of the angels, formed by millions of separate particles of rain, each particle a prism, which cuts up the rays of light into separate parts, and explains their anatomy and their colours? What fable of old can stand side by side with the fact that—

Each drop of water is a world, containing
 Creatures more numerous than the men of earth,
 The April shower upon the green tree raining,
 To fresh creations in each leaf gives birth :
 Nature, her balance everywhere regaining,
 New breathing things to form, leaves nothing dearth,—
 Spitzbergen's ice and Afric's sandy field
 To Nature's living mass their tribute yield?

No! there is more wonder in truth than fable, and more poetry in fact than fiction.

But there are revelations of this wonder-world of change more startling than these, and perhaps more truly poetic. The most obdurate and inflexible bodies seem destined by a law of their nature to work their way up through successive orders of being, till they reach the highest of them all; and when there, to fill a purpose essential to the very existence of man himself. Thus, without phosphorus, and sulphur, and potash, and lime, the human frame would be destitute of outline and power of locomotion, for with these materials its bones

resist the destroying influences to which seeds are subject; but which the young plant is unable to absorb into its tissues; hence the necessity, during germination, for its conversion into sugar.

are formed ; so also, without a supply of common salt, which is a compound of a brilliant metal and a poisonous gas, the alkaline character of the blood could not be maintained, and the frame would soon fall into corruption and perish ; and in like manner, without iron, the identical metal of which ploughshares and steam-engines are formed, life could not be sustained even for the shortest space of time ; for, by the presence of the metal in the globules of the blood, that fluid maintains its brilliancy of colour, and is enabled to take up the vitalizing atoms of the air, and so continue the enjoyments of a happy existence. While still more wonderful, perhaps, are those discoveries by which Liebig has rendered himself immortal, and which reveal to us the chemical phenomena involved in the operations of the brain, and which indicate that the amount of phosphorus and nitrogenous principles, removed continually from the nervous system, are in direct proportion to the intensity and continuance of thought, and which point to the immediate relation of the material to the spiritual.

Passing from these things to matters less directly associated with the phenomena of life, we find beauty still predominant, and poetry of the most lofty character the presiding idea. A dark surface absorbs more heat than a light one ; at the same time it radiates or parts with heat more rapidly than a light surface. The chemist exposes the backs of his hands to the noonday sun ; the one bare, and the other covered with a black cloth. The uncovered hand will be at a temperature of from 85 to 90 degrees, and the covered one at from 98 to 106 degrees. The black colour absorbs about 15 per cent. more heat than the white one, and yet the covered hand is uninjured, while the other is scorched and blistered ; in this way, although apparently in opposition to the result required, has God provided for his children, who dwell under the fierce heat of the southern sun. He has made them black, that they may live in harmony with the golden sunshine above them, and not as the objects of the white man's tyranny, when he forgets *his* God, and darkens the green wilderness with the shadow of a devil.

There is poetry in such facts as these ; and when the human mind has achieved for itself a nobler inheritance of wisdom than it now possesses, and true genius takes the place of commercial craft, we shall find the poet and the painter combining to do honour to the men by whose labours these wonderful truths have been unfolded. The picture of Faraday turning a ray of light from its course by the

power of a magnet, under the direction of his own poet-mind, will be looked upon with profound reverence ; and the names of Davy, Liebig, Berzelius, and Dumas, will adorn the poetical annals of generations now waiting to be born. The same scrutinizing power which detects sulphur in the atmosphere, and in this way accounts for the peculiar odour of the electric spark ; which traces out the analogy between that same atmosphere and nitric acid ; which discovers the method of converting old rags into sugar, and sawdust into bread ; which detects the service of the humble moss in cleaving and crumbling the rugged rocks on which it chances to grow, by means of the oxalic acid which its roots contain ; which observes the effect of sunlight in elaborating the juices of the fruits, and makes the same sunlight a painter of pictures ; which compounds a material which acts as an antidote to pain, and proves one of the greatest of auxiliaries in the service of humanity, under the name of chloroform ; which not only finds

Tongues in trees,
Books in the running brooks, sermons in stones ;

but travels up

Through the measureless fields,
Where the silver moon and the comet wheels,

and measures the magnitude of those lamps of God ; will deal with higher than physical things, and learn to attach its sympathies with a moral law ; securing for itself a nobler salvation than from the choke-damp of a mine, and inheriting a purer religion than the worship of organic compounds.

Meantime, the elements wait on man, and combine to do him service ; he has made matter subservient to his will, and in this conquest of the material by the immaterial, the world reads the idea of its advancing humanity. The lesson is one which humbles, because it points to a dependence on God, and suggests that there are regions into which the mind will yet have to enter to learn its spiritual duties, and connect them with its conquest of the world.

“In whatever light we consider these matters, the argument of benevolent design and contrivance deduced from the obvious facts themselves remains unaltered. The care and beneficence of the Creator is not less shown in the connection he has established between physical and moral health. The labour which a man is obliged to

exert to procure for himself the necessaries of life, is not less essential to the maintenance of a healthy tone of mind than of a sound and active condition of the bodily organism. No evil can be greater than the rust, alike of body and soul, which results from inactivity. The state of labour is the very condition of enjoyment; not, indeed, the excessive and slavish toil to which a very large portion of mankind have, by a most unfortunate combination of circumstances, been reduced; but that moderate and well regulated labour of mind and body which conduces so much to the welfare of both, and which would be, under more favourable auspices, fully sufficient to impart comfort and abundance to all. If men only knew and felt how inseparably their own individual happiness is connected with the welfare and prosperity of their species; if those who have intellect, and power, and wealth at their disposal, could only be persuaded to thrust aside the petty jealousies and cares, the idle parade and prejudices of society, and join heart and hand in the great work of human improvement, how much might be effected? How much happier, and how much better all might become if a sound and universal spirit of philanthropy were once awakened, capable of embracing within its pale all orders and conditions of men, considering them as they really are, the children of one common Parent, bound together by the ties of brotherhood, each having a special duty assigned to him to perform, not independently of, but in conjunction with the rest, and exciting all to render each other mutual assistance in surmounting the difficulties and trials of this life of discipline and pupilage.” *

* Fownes.



FLORAL SYMBOLS.

IN TWO PARTS.

PART I.

YE poetry of woods! romance of fields!
 Nature's imagination bodied bright!
 Earth's floral page, that high instruction yields;
 For not, oh, not alone to charm the sight,
 Gave God your blooming forms, your leaves of light;
 Ye speak a language which we yet may learn—
 A divination of mysterious might:
 And glorious thought may angel eyes discern
 Flower writ in mead and vale, where'er man's footsteps turn.

CHARLES SWAIN.

SYMBOLISM has been a prominent feature in the history of the human race, and has manifested itself in an infinite diversity of forms. Men have ever sought for the expression and embodiment of the sentiments and passions of their hearts, and have found them in the appearances of nature. The green world of nature, with its multiplicity of beauties—whether of field or forest, of mountain, glen, or river—has thus become a great allegory of the human mind in all its phases and manifestations; hence the invention of symbolic language, or the adoption of types as expressive of the hopes and fears and Protean sentiments of the human heart. This symbolism had its first origin as a system among the imaginative and luxurious people of oriental climes. Under a soft, serene, and intensely blue sky, glowing with unclouded sunshine during the day, and glittering with unnumbered stars by night, it is not surprising that the imagination, once kindled by the contemplation of beauty, should trace, in the varied forms of loveliness which adorned the bosom of the earth, a language expressive of the phases of the human mind, and a sympathy for human sorrows in the enchantments of the earth and heaven. And thus, in these sunny and luxuriant climes, the highest aspirations of the human soul—religion and poetry, the veneration for beauty and holiness, found language and expression in the symbolic vocabulary

of nature. From these lands, blessed with exuberance and fertility, this language has found its way to our own cold and cloudy shores, having been brought hither by pilgrims, who have toiled across the wide deserts, and through the fruitful valleys of the East, to pay homage at the consecrated shrines of nations and temples which have now no other existence than as fragments in the history of the past.

Of these floral symbols, some are of such a general character, and they would be adopted and appreciated so readily by any people, that it would be difficult to recognize them as individual facts. The flower would ever be a type of all innocence and beauty. The lovely hues and symmetrical forms which flowers display, would ever suggest an æsthetical or ideal beauty pertaining only to the soul. Their brief existence and decay would render them fit representatives of our own fleeting lives. Literature abounds with metaphors and symbols of this general character. Thus of Corinne, that warm-hearted daughter of Italy, whose soul brimmed with passionate affection, as warm and pure as the sunlight of her native skies, Madame de Stael writes: "This lovely woman, whose features seemed designed to depict felicity—this child of the sun, a prey to hidden grief—was like a flower, still fresh and brilliant, but within whose leaves may be seen the first dark impress of that withering blight which soon shall lay it low. . . . The long black lashes veiled her languid eyes, and threw a shadow over the tintless cheek." Beneath was written this line from the "Pastor Fido:"—

Scarcely can we say this was a rose.

A similar passage occurs in a lament for Lady Jane Grey:—

Thou didst die
Even as a flower beneath the summer ray,
In incensed beauty, and didst take thy way,
Even like its fragrance, up into the sky.

J. W. ORD.

In such a tone of subdued eloquence does the sister of Sir Philip Sydney mourn over the memory of her sainted and incomparable brother.

Break now your garlands, O! ye shepherd lasses,
Since the fair flower that them adorned is gone;
The flower that them adorned is gone to ashes;
Never again let lass put garland on:
Instead of garland, wear sad cypress now,
And bitter elder, broken from the bough.

The language of deep feeling is ever poetical, and in every age of the world's history flowers have aided in giving force to the utterance of the heart's passion, whether of love, hate, sorrow, or joy. Perhaps love and sorrow have created more poetry than any other sentiments which have ever had birth in the breast of humanity.

If bliss be a frail and perishing flower,
 Born only to decay;
 Oh! who,—when it blooms but a single hour,—
 Would fling its sweets away?

Among the many chaste and poetical allegories which occur scattered up and down the eastern literature, is the following;—"As this dark mould sends upwards, and out of its very heart, the rare Persian rose, so does hope grow out of evil, and the darker the evil the brighter the hope, as from a richer and fouler soil comes the more vigorous and larger flower." There is another of this class, which conveys in a most elegant form a symbolical embodiment of the refining influences of the pure and the beautiful. "A traveller, in passing through a country in Persia, chanced to take into his hand a piece of clay which lay by the way-side, and to his surprise he found it to exhale the most delightful fragrance: 'Thou art but a poor piece of clay,' said he, 'an unsightly, unattractive, poor piece of clay: yet how fragrant art thou! How refreshing! I admire thee, I love thee; thou shalt be my companion, I will carry thee in my bosom. But whence hast thou this fragrance?' The clay replied, 'I have been dwelling with the rose!'" In another Persian legend, we are told that Sadi the poet when a slave, presented to his tyrant master a rose, accompanied with this pathetic appeal:—"Do good to thy servant whilst thou hast the power, for the season of power is often as transient as the duration of this beautiful flower." This melted the heart of his lord, and the slave obtained his liberty.

The well-known "Language of Flowers," was first introduced into this country by Lady Mary Wortley Montague; but in the modern system nothing is preserved of the fresh poetry and brilliancy of thought which characterized the floral symbolism of ancient eastern nations. The rich imagery and startling truth of the eastern metaphors and symbols, have crumbled into ruins, like the temples dedicated to their gods. Sickly and weak as is the modern language of flowers, it is yet as prevalent in use as ever, and has been rendered tame by its universal adoption in the intercourse of life; instead of

being preserved as a part of religious worship, and of the highest forms of poetry. In Turkey, you may, through the assistance of these emblems, either quarrel, reproach, or send letters of passion, friendship, or civility, or even news, without ever inking your fingers; for there is no colour, no weed, no flower, no fruit, herb, nor feather, that has not a verse belonging to it. So, too, no Turkish lady would send a congratulatory message, or a ceremonious invitation, without sending with it some emblematical flowers carefully wrapped in an embroidered handkerchief, made fragrant by the odours of flowers, which convey also an emblematical meaning. But these are merely fragments of the ancient customs of the eastern nations, where all was symbol, emblem, and allegory; and where the imagination usurped the power and controlled even the affairs of the state.

These emblematic verses are in the form of enigmas, and are founded on a sort of *crambo* or *bout rime*. M. Hamma has collected about a hundred specimens, but they are exceedingly untranslatable. We quote three of the most manageable—

Almonde.—Wer bana bir Ominde.

Pear.—Let me not despair.

Rose.—You smile, but still my anguish grows;

Rose.—For thee my heart with love still glows.

Tea.—You are both sun and moon to me,

Tea.—Yours is the light by which I see.

But these are arbitrary and fancied similarities founded on the mere rhyming and jingling of words, and although occasionally conveying an idea, are upon the whole, mere frivolities to fritter away the hours which might be better spent in the growth of ideas, in tracing out the real symbolical expressions of nature, in establishing these as keys to the æsthetics of all beauty, and as the frame-work of the noblest poetry.

To catch a glimpse of floral symbolism, when yet in its pristine vigour and poetical sublimity, we must go back into the dim vista of departed years, and search amid the mighty caves and temples where the early nations of India, Egypt, and Chaldea, knelt fervently in adoration; and where superstition clothed all things with a wild and terrible grandeur, and rendered natural objects emblematic of the highest spiritual truths.

Amid these relics of former magnificence, and within the walls of these crumbling temples, are yet to be seen the sculptured symbols

which embodied the ideas of their daily faith. Dread and mystical as many of these are, even when viewed in the calm light of reason, there is yet a bewitching poetry, and a sublimity of thought associated with them, as startling and wonderful, as they are beautiful and true. The history of the universe has been written in living characters upon the obdurate granite in which those mystic caves are hewn. The dawn of creation is represented by a leaf divided into light and darkness; when

The heavens and the earth
Rose out of a chaos.

And the story of the ages has in like manner been written in symbols of leaves and flowers.

Of the flowers consecrated to religious deities by the symbol worshippers of India and Egypt, none occupy a more prominent position than the Lotos. Its sacred leaf was the

Emblem and cradle of creative Night.

It was anciently revered in Egypt, as it is at this day at Hindostan, Thibet, and Nepaul, where they believe it was in the consecrated bosom of this plant that Brahma was born, and on which Osiris delights to float. Naturalists have differed in opinion whether the celebrated Lotos was a hero, a flower, or a tree. Some authors have affirmed that it was a rough, thorny shrub, the seeds of which were used to make bread; but the testimony of Herodotus, that the lotos is a species of water-lily, which grows in abundance in the Nile during the inundations, is so very conclusive, that no other solution of the question can be accepted. Herodotus bears testimony to the high antiquity of the Egyptian veneration for the lotus, and M. Savary assures us that at the present day, the degenerate children of the Nile are animated by the same feelings of worship and veneration. It was called the "Lily of the Nile," from its growing in abundance on the banks, and in the marshes which form the delta of that river. It is a stately and majestic plant, of the Nymphæa tribe, and rises above two feet above the water, having a calyx like a large tulip, and diffusing an odour like that of the lily. The wonderful physical peculiarities in the growth of this plant, rendered it an appropriate symbol in a worship of the most degrading and immoral character.

The plant grows in the water, and the blossoms are produced amongst its broad ovate leaves. In the centre of the flower is formed the seed-vessel, which is produced in the form of a bell or inverted

cone, and punctuated on the top with little cavities or cells, in which the seeds grow. The seeds, when ripe, are prevented from escaping, in consequence of the orifices of the cells being too small, and so they germinate in the places where they ripen, and shoot forth into new plants, until they acquire such a degree of magnitude, as to burst the matrice open and release themselves; after which, like other aquatic plants, they take root where the current chances to deposit them. This apparently self-productive plant became the symbol of the reproductive power of all nature, and was worshipped as a symbol of the All-Creative-Power,—the spirit which “moved upon the face of the waters,” and which gave life and organization to matter. We find the same symbol occurring in every part of the Northern hemisphere where symbolic religion has prevailed. The sacred images of the Tartars, Japanese, and Indians are almost all represented as resting upon the lotos leaves. The Chinese divinity, Puzza, is seated on a lotos, and the Japanese God is represented sitting on a water-lily. The flatterers of Adrian, emperor of Rome, after the death of his favourite Antinous, endeavoured to persuade him that the young man was metamorphosed into a lotos flower; but the emperor created a temple to his memory, and wished it to be believed that he had been changed into a constellation. The plant is poetically described in the *Helopades*, as “The cooling flower, which is oppressed by the appearance of day, and afraid of the stars;”^{*}—in allusion to the circumstance of its spreading its flowers only in the night. There is a beautiful passage in the *Sacontala* in reference to the palmistry of the Brahmin priests. “What!” exclaims a prophetic Brahmin, “the very palm of his hand bears the mark of empire, and, while he thus eagerly extends it, shows its lines of exquisite net-work, and grows like a lotos expanded at early dawn, when the ruddy splendour of its petals hides all other tints in obscurity.”[†]

“This is the sublime, the hallowed symbol, that eternally occurs in oriental mythology; and in truth not without substantial reason, for it is itself a lovely prodigy; it contains a treasure of physical instruction, and affords to the enraptured botanist exhaustless matter of amusement and contemplation. No wonder, therefore, that the philosophizing sons of Mizriam adorned their majestic structures with the spreading tendrils of this vegetable, and made the ample expand-

^{*} *Helopades*, p. 282.

[†] *Sacontala*, p. 89.

ing vase that crowns its lofty stem, the capital of the most beautiful columns.”*

The onion was held in similar esteem as a religious symbol in the mysterious solemnities and divinations of the mythologies of Egypt and Hindostan. Mr. Crauford has imagined that the delicate red veins and fibres of the onion rendered it an object of veneration, as symbolizing the blood, at the shedding of which the Hindoo shudders. But astronomy has stamped celebrity on the onion; for, on cutting through it, there appears, beneath the external coat, a succession of orbs, one within the other, in regular order, after the manner of the revolving spheres. We have the authority of Alexander,* that the onion was worshipped as a symbol of the planetary universe by the astronomers of Chaldea, before it was adopted by either Egypt or India. The Egyptian veneration for plants and animals arose from their symbolical representations of the benevolent operations of nature; while there were some which were held in abhorrence from possessing opposite symbolic meanings. Thus the onion, as a symbol of the spheres, was held sacred to Osiris,—the soul of the material universe, the energy that generates and nourishes all things; and to his consort Isis,—the nurse and mother of the world, the goddess of a thousand names,—the Infinite Myrionyma.

Notwithstanding the extreme veneration for the onion as a noble astronomical symbol, yet when a more minute attention to its growth and cultivation had taught that it flourished with the greatest vigour when the moon was in the wane, the priests of Osiris began to relax in their worship, and by the priests of Diana, at Bubastio, it was held in abhorrence and detestation. These floral symbols of the ancient nations have elucidated some of the most difficult questions concerning their history, and have made it certain, that most of the Indian, and Egyptian customs originated in Chaldea,—that land of serene and tranquil skies, where the observation of nature first grew into a science, and was cradled and cherished in the earliest ages of the world.

* Maurice's Indian Antiquities, p. 527.

† Alexander ab Alexandro, lib. vi. cap. 26.

FLORAL SYMBOLS, IN TWO PARTS.

PART II.

THE rose has been a symbolic flower in every age of the world. It has been the universal symbol of beauty and love; the half-expanded bud representing the first dawn of the sublime passion, and the full-blown flower being an emblem of the matured love, which, when it ripens in the heart of a devoted woman, gives her a nobility and grace only equalled by the angels, and renders her sacred to ONE in fond and constant attachment. It gives new life and enchantment to her beauty, and sheds a heavenly light upon the domestic hearth, and hallows all who come within its influence. The rose is the delight of the East, the eternal theme of the poet, and the emblem of all virtue and loveliness. The Romans, whose profuse use of flowers subjected them to the reproofs of their philosophers, considered the rose as an emblem of festivity. The Egyptians made it a symbol of silence, and crowned Harpocrates with a garland of its blossoms.

The classical story of the death of the beautiful youth, Hyacinth, has rendered that flower an emblem of grief. It is very probable, however, that the hyacinth of the ancients was the red lily, called the Martagon lily, or Turk's cap. Virgil describes the flower as of a bright red colour, and as being marked with the Greek exclamation of grief, AI, AI, and which may be faintly traced in the black marks of the Turk's cap. Milton speaks of this as

That sanguine flower inscribed with woe,

and as there are no such marks upon the wood hyacinth, that plant has been called *Hyacinthus non scriptus* (not inscribed). The Eastern poets have made the hyacinth subserve many poetical uses. By Hafiz it was adopted as the symbol of elegance and grace, and he delighted to compare his mistress's hair to its blossoms; hence the term,—hyacinthine locks, which was originally an Oriental com-

parison. The asphodel was also an emblem of sorrow, and the Greeks used it at their funerals.

We cannot wonder that so fragrant and lovely a plant as the myrtle should become a symbolical teacher. It was most anciently the emblem of peace and quietude, and gave a living freshness to the annunciation of the angel mentioned by Zechariah, who said, as he stood among the myrtle-trees, "We have walked to and fro through the earth, and behold, all the earth sitteth still and is at rest." From being an emblem of peace, on account of its quiet beauty and perfume, it afterwards became an emblem of war, in consequence of the hardness of its wood rendering it very suitable for warlike instruments :—

The war from stubborn myrtle shafts receives.

VIRGIL.

From the supple nature of its branches, together with the odour emitted by its leaves, it was largely used for entwining into wreaths, garlands, and crowns. These were worn at the Roman festivals, and the myrtle-boughs were steeped in the wine, to improve its flavour and fragrance ; and hence the myrtle became a recognized emblem of festivity. By the magistrates of Athens, it was worn as a symbol of office. By the Greeks, it was dedicated to Venus, either because it grows near the sea, whence she is said to have arisen, or because the sweet and unfading nature of its foliage made it a suitable tribute to the goddess of beauty. The Greeks planted the myrtle abundantly in those lovely groves which have been so renowned in song, and where he who wandered was greeted by such a succession of delightful odours, that he might believe himself transported to some sweet land of enchantment, where every breath was sacred to poetry and love. The myrtle was sacred as a symbol of love and beauty, and the first temple erected to Venus was surrounded by a grove of myrtles. When the ancient poets or painters represent Venus rising from the ocean, they tell us that the Hours or Seasons, who were the offspring of Jupiter and Themis, present her with a scarf of many colours, and a garland of myrtles. There is an old fable concerning Eratosthratus, who burned the famous temple of Diana at Ephesus, on the same night as Alexander the Great was born. He was a Naucratian merchant, and during one of his voyages, there arose a terrible storm. Fortunately, he had in his possession a small statue of Venus, whose

protection he immediately implored. The goddess caused a prodigious number of green myrtles to spring up in the ship, and of these the sailors made garlands, and by wearing them were saved. They arrived in safety at Naucratis, the great commercial city of Egypt, and from that period the garlands of myrtle were called Naucratices. By Papirius Cursor, who erected the first sun-dial at Rome, the myrtle was made a symbol of the Roman Empire; and to make the idea more capable of appreciation by the people, he planted two myrtles, one reputed plebeian, and the other patrician. The prosperity or decline of these trees was regarded by the Romans as ominous of which party would predominate or sink into imbecility, in the government of the empire.

The floral symbols of Holy Writ are exceedingly beautiful, and are frequently used to convey a divine command in a poetical form; and are usually remarkable for their botanical correctness. From the circumstance of Elijah having been sheltered from the persecutions of King Ahab by the juniper of the mountains, that plant has become a symbol of succour, or an asylum. Britain might well adopt this as her national emblem, for truly, since the stirring events in the various European states, persons of all languages and creeds may say with the Psalmist,—“Thou hast been a shelter for me, and a strong tower from the enemy.” The almond was a symbol of haste and vigilance to the Hebrew poets,—“What seest thou?” said the Lord to Jeremiah, and he answered,—“I see a rod of an almond-tree. Then, said the Lord,—Thou hast well seen; for I will hasten my word and will perform it.” The almond is a lovely plant, and puts forth its delicate blushing flowers so quickly, and so much in advance of other trees, and whilst its own branches are yet leafless, that its adoption as a symbol of haste is very happy. With the Eastern poets it was a symbol of hope,—

The hope, in dreams of a happier hour,
That alights on misery's brow,
Springs out of the silvery almond flower
That blooms on a leafless bough.

MOORE.

But no floral symbol can equal in beauty or sacredness the passion-flower. This lovely blossom is so peculiar in construction, that when the Spanish conquerors of the New World first met with it in the woods, they gave it its name, and adopted it as an emblem of the

sufferings of Christ. The thread-like stamens which surround the rays of the flower and some other portions, suggested to their enthusiastic imaginations the story of the Saviour's passion! and the sight of this wondrous symbol in a wilderness in which they trod for the first time, seemed to them to betoken conquest, riches, and power—to be achieved under the sanction of religion. But they sought rather to insure a temporal dominion, than to act in obedience to that God who had planted flowers in those solitary wilds; and the very men who beheld in the passion-flower an emblem of mercy and of love, an emblem of faith in God and fellowship to man, carried misery, malevolence, desolation, and death, wherever they trod, and made their standard a signal of blood, torture, and tyranny. Oh! that iniquity should ride rampant under the sacred banner of a Christian faith, and sow the seeds of ruin and degradation, while wearing an emblem of mercy and gentleness upon its 'savage brow! Let the passion-flower be still an emblem for us, but let it keep us in the fulfilment of the benign precepts of the great teacher, whose suffering is symbolized in the form of the flower,—that by contemplating it, we may be raised in thankfulness to God, and learn to recognize the great truths taught by Him who

Trod

The paths of sorrow, that we might find peace.

The clover has been revered from the most remote antiquity as a religious symbol. Its triple leaf renders it adaptable to a multiplicity of ideas. The Druids held it in high repute, both as a charm against evil spirits, and for its supposed medicinal virtues. They were very confident in its powers, because its leaf represented the three departments of Nature,—the earth, the sea, and the heaven. The legends of Ireland tell how St. Patrick chose it as an emblem of the Trinity, when engaged in converting the native Irish, and hence the esteem in which it is held by the Irish people;—for the shamrock is only the common white, or Dutch clover (*Trifolium repens*). The ancients represented Hope by a little child standing on tiptoe, and holding a trefoil in his hand. Scarcely any religious symbol has been so widely and reverently regarded as such, as the aloe. Throughout the East it is held in profound veneration. The Mahometans, especially those who reside in Egypt, regard it as a religious symbol of the most exalted character. The Mussulman who has performed a pilgrimage to the shrine at Mecca, ever after considers himself entitled to the

veneration of a saint, and hangs the aloe over his door to signify his religious purity, and to proclaim the great duty which he has performed. It is also highly esteemed as a charm against any malign genius, and no evil spirit will pass a threshold where so holy a symbol is suspended. The Jews at Cairo have a similar belief, and suspend the aloe at their doors, to prevent the intrusion of these dreadful influences. The Mahometans, who plant their burial-places with lovely shrubs and flowers, making even death look beautiful and the graveyard a place filled with promises of joy, plant the aloe at the extremity of every grave, on a spot facing the epitaph; and Burckhardt tells us that they call it by the Arabic name *saber*, signifying *patience*.

The Eastern poets usually make the aloe a symbol of bitterness, doubtless in allusion to its association with death, and to the bitter flavour of its juices. "As aloe is to the body, so is affliction to the soul,—bitter, very bitter." It is usually adopted as an emblem of acute woe, of "Sorrow that locks up the struggling heart."

The woful teris that their letin fal,
As bitter werin, out of teris kinde,
For paine, as is lique aloes, or gal.

CHAUCER.

The wormwood is also a symbol of bitterness. In the modern Language of Flowers it represents absence. Dr. Watts says, in his work on Logic, "Bitter is an equivocal word; there is bitter wormwood, there are bitter words, there are bitter enemies, and a bitter cold morning;" and the absence of those we love is also bitter, and may well be spoken by wormwood. The rosemary has a similar meaning, and has become a symbol of remembrance, from the old custom of using it at funerals, and perhaps from its supposed medical virtue of improving the memory. Shakspeare uses it as a symbol of remembrance:—

There's rosemary for you—that's for remembrance:
I pray you, love, remember,

said the sad Ophelia: so Perdita, in *Winter's Tale*:—

[*To Polixines and Camillo.*] You're welcome, sir!
Give me those flowers there, Dorcas.—Reverend sirs,
For you there's rosemary, and rue; these keep
Seeming, and savour, all the winter long:
Grace and remembrance, be to you both,
And welcome to our shearing!

Pol. Shepherdess,
 (A fair one are you) well you fit our ages
 With flowers of winter.

It is perhaps the greatest evidence of the transcendency of Shakspeare's genius, that in the philosophy of little things there is a stern regard to truth of detail. Never does he mention an insect or a flower, but it is in harmony with the season, place, and moral of the event it serves to illustrate. His floral symbols are especially beautiful, and when regarded as emblems of the purpose of the dialogue, shed a new light and beauty upon his sacred pages. In the same scene as we have just quoted, he makes Perdita give flowers to her visitors appropriate to, and symbolical of, their various ages.

Here's flowers for you ;
 Hot lavender, mints, savory, marjoram ;
 The marigold, that goes to bed with the sun,
 And with him rises weeping : these are flowers
 Of middle summer, and, I think, they are given
 To men of middle age.——

* * * * *

Now, my fairest friend,
 I would, I had some flowers o' the spring, that might
 Become your time of day ; and yours, and yours ;
 That wear upon your virgin branches yet.

* * * * *

Daffodils,
 That come before the swallow dares, and take
 The winds of March with beauty ; violets dim,
 But sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes,
 Or Cytherea's breath ; pale primroses,
 That die unmarried, ere they can behold
 Bright Phœbus in his strength, a malady
 Most incident to maids ; both oxlips, and
 The crown-imperial ; lilies of all kinds,
 The fleur-de-lis being one!

But the most beautiful of Shakspeare's floral symbols occurs where poor Ophelia in her madness goes to make "fantastic garlands"

Of crow-flowers, nettles, daisies, and long purples,

which are all emblematical flowers, and tell a silent tale of her broken heart. The first signifies *fair maid* ; the second, *stung to the quick* ; the third, *her virgin bloom* ; the fourth, *under the cold hand of death* ; and the whole, being wild flowers, might denote *the bewildered state*

of her faculties. No wreath could have been chosen more emblematical of the sorrows of this beautiful blossom, blighted by disappointed love, and withered by filial sorrow.*

We may learn much from this language of flowers. The alphabet of Nature is rich in eloquent teachings, and appropriate, though mute, language, expressive of the hopes and fears which dwell in every human breast. Flowers are appropriate symbols of human feelings and passions, and the sentiments and emotions which sway and agitate the soul of man :—

Those token-flowers tell,
What words can ne'er express so well.

And so, too, might have sung the Israelite of old, when wandering on the flowery banks of Jordan; or the Babylonian, when musing on the grassy borders of the Euphrates; or the swarthy son of Egypt, when kneeling in worship beside the sacred waters of the Nile. Flowers were the most prominent feature in the symbolic languages of antiquity, and originated in the true language of Nature, when the human heart made its first utterances. And when flowers were recognized as proofs and manifestations of divine love, they immediately became living symbols of human history, and foretokens of the events and purposes which were locked up in the unborn ages, and which were to be slowly unfolded to the human family, as Time sailed and ages were developed. Let them be symbolical to us in every place and season; and when Nature puts on her summer attire, and in her thousand varieties of flowers shows us the sweetest of her smiles, we may, through these silent preachers, become partakers of the joy which is wafted to them by the breezes of the morning. If the typical resemblances of flowers moved the men of old to veneration and worship, and kindled in their hearts noble aspirations, it may do the same for us, and teach us in the hour of affliction, or in the exuberance of joy, still to look up to

That God, who grows not old!
Who built the earth, and piled, from grassy vales,
The pillar-mountains to sustain yon roof,
Resplendent and serene;—who hung out lamps,
To cast their calm lights o'er the deep, when storms
Rise muttering;—whose hand hath shed wild flowers

In clefts o' the rock, and cloth'd green knolls with grass
And clover, and sweet herbs, and honey-dews,
Shed in the starlight bells, where the brown bees
Draw sweets;—who fill'd the summer bush with birds
That sing the live-long day;—that poured cool streams
To murmur 'neath dark willows;—fills the air
With odorous breaths and pulsing music, like
The breath of June.

Athanase, by E. F. ROBERTS.



FAIRY RINGS.

In days of old, when Arthur filled the throne,
Whose acts and fame to foreign lands were blown,
The King of Elfs, and little Fairy Queen
Gambolled on heaths, and danced on every green :
And where the jolly troop had led the round,
The grass, unbidden, rose and marked the ground.

As the autumn green takes possession of the meadows, and the hope of another spring cheers the labour of the husbandman, a thousand curious things may be seen in hedgerows, on commons, in copses, and by the stony wayside. Not the least interesting of these strange sights and autumn wonders are those rings of rich green grass which appear on lawns and old pastures, familiarly known as "Fairy Rings,"—subjects of inquiry to the curious, and of poetic interest to the imaginative. These rings are of all sizes, ranging from the circumference of a common cart-wheel, to wide sweeps of fifteen or twenty feet diameter, and distinctly marked in outline by the rich greenness of the grass which forms the exterior circumference. There are not a few of those who love to ramble in green and shady places, and who know somewhat of the economy of the fields, who consider fairy rings mere pleasant fictions, whereas they are genuine realities, and may be seen by every observer who chooses to exercise patience and diligence. On the flats at Wanstead, towards the gate which opens on the road to the "Thatched House;" on the smooth lawn of Cheshunt Park, and especially in front of Cheshunt House; in the rich meadows between Highgate and Finchley; and on the "Rye," at Peckham; we have always succeeded in finding fairy rings: and in no meadowy district will a diligent search go long unrewarded.

In common with all appearances of a mysterious character, these rings have been long associated with the superstitions of the country, and time out of mind consecrated to the service of the fairies. They are, indeed, the impressions left by fairy feet upon the grass: where they have trodden in the giddy dance at midnight, rings of luxuriant

verdure spring up, and so sacred are these circles of green, that the simple sheep abstain from them, and tread but softly where they grow. Shakspeare makes beautiful use of this article of ancient faith, in that passage in the *Tempest*, where Prospero invokes for the last time the supernatural powers to his aid:—

Ye elves of hills, brooks, standing lakes and groves;
And ye that on the sands with printless foot
Do chase the ebbing Neptune, and do fly him
When he comes back; you demi-puppets, that
By moonshine do the green-sour ringlets make,
Whereof the ewe not bites; and you, whose pastime
'Tis to make midnight mushrooms.

Drayton, speaking of the fairies, says—

They in their courses make that round
In meadows and in marshes found,
Of them so called the fairy ground.

According to Olaus Magnus, this cause of the circles in the grass, called “Fairy Rings,” was a general belief with the northern nations; and most of our poets who adopt it, follow those traditions which the Norsemen left amongst us.

Some very curious legends attach themselves to these fairy rings, as indeed they do to every other branch of fairy lore. In Scott's *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, a strange story is related of a poor man, who being employed in pulling heather upon Peatlaw, near Carterhaugh, had tired of his labour, and had lain himself down to sleep upon a fairy ring. When he awoke, he was amazed to find himself in the midst of a populous city, to which, as well as to the means of transportation, he was a stranger. His coat was left upon the Peatlaw, and his bonnet, which had fallen off in the course of his aerial journey, was afterwards found hanging on the steeple of the church at Lanark. The distress of the luckless adventurer was somewhat relieved by meeting a carrier whom he had formerly known, who carried him back to Glasgow by a slower conveyance than had taken him from thence. At Carterhaugh, at the confluence of the Ettrick and Yarrow, the peasants point out these rings as unmistakable evidences of fairy revels; and throughout Scotland, and more particularly in Selkirkshire, the belief in fairies and fairy influence is still pertinaciously held by the peasants. Moses Pitt, in a scarce tract, relates that his female servant—“Ann Jeffries * * * was one day

sitting in an arbour in the garden knitting, and there suddenly came over the hedge six persons of small stature, all clothed in green, which frightened her so much as to throw her into a sickness. They continued their appearance to her, never less than two at a time, nor ever more than eight. From harvest time to the Christmas following, these fairies came to her and fed her; and one day," says Moses Pitt—who was either a fool or a gross deceiver—"one day she gave me a piece of her [fairy] bread, which I did eat, and think it was the most delicious food that ever I did eat, either before or since." The same favoured Ann Jeffries was once presented with a silver cup by these fairies, and was often seen dancing around the trees, alleging that she was dancing with the fairies. Much as they favoured her, however, in her times of prosperity, the fairies fearfully deserted her in the hour of danger, for being thrown into jail as an impostor, instead of aiding in her escape, they forsook her

To dance on ringlets to the whistling wind.*

It was one of the primary articles of Delta's faith, that

The leaden talisman of Truth,
Hath disenchanted of its rainbow hues,
The sky; and robbed the fields of half their flowers.

And in his poem of *Enchantment*, he sets forth that poetry is being shamed out of existence by the march of modern science,—an assertion which is untrue as regards the poetry of human experience and sentiment, though well borne out in the fate which has already fallen upon the legends and fancies of poetical superstitions. Truth and poetry may march together—truth widening the field and opening up new resources for the growth of poetry, and poetry shedding a semipiternal lustre on the acquisitions of truth. Newton dissects the rainbow, and by showing its prismatic structure, disenchanting it of its angel uses. Franklin analyzes the thunder, and by pointing out its electrical origin, robs it of its avenging voice; and in the same manner, the man of science, kneeling on the green turf to speculate upon the fairy ring, finds that, like other natural appearances which have worn for a time poetical and superstitious attributes, this too must yield an answer to the touch of that "leaden talisman," and become a prose fact in the economy of nature. It seems at first sight a pity to sweep away a fancy so beautiful; but yet truth—though only the

* Hone's Year Book.

truth of a fairy ring—is superior to fiction, and while the cold inquiry of the student of physics clips the wings of the soul on the one hand, it enlarges its life on the other, and science by increasing wonder, works in harmony with all truth in the extension of the field of poetry.

To disenchant the fairy rings has cost the philosophers considerable trouble. So sagacious an observer as Gilbert White, never accurately fathomed the beautiful phenomenon; nor did Captain Brown, one of the ablest editors of the Selborne letters, who absurdly attributes them to electrical agency. The electrical theory of their production was a favourite one during the infancy of electrical science, when it was the fashion to attribute everything of a puzzling character to that subtle agency. Sir Walter Scott held the same opinion, and speaks of them as the “electrical rings, which vulgar credulity supposes to be traces of fairy revels.” It is the more strange that this opinion should have been cherished, when the true cause had been hinted at again and again by the poets,—whose words are as often prophetic in regard to the discoveries of science, as they are of ethical and historical developments. Shakspeare, in the passage already quoted, sounds the key-note where he speaks of the fairies as “making the midnight mushrooms;” and the author of *Round about our Coal Fire*, speaks suggestively of the frequent appearance of these rings in spots “where mushrooms grow;” these luxurious rings of grass being caused solely by the growth of successive crops of certain species of fungi.

That law of agriculture which insists upon the rotation of crops, has no more palpable illustration than these mysterious developments in the meadows. The recent discovery, that when one kind of plants has occupied a spot for a certain length of time, the soil becomes unfit for that plant, but will readily nourish another kind, makes it evident that rotation of crops is no invention of man, but a provision of nature, and a prominent feature in her vegetable economy. Dr. Roget, in his Bridgewater treatise on *Animal and Vegetable Physiology*, gives the result of a series of experiments performed on plants, by immersing their roots in filtered water for several days; when, after the lapse of a certain time, the water became charged with certain excretions, or matters cast off from the plant, which excretions, in the case of the roots of the *Chandenilla muralis*, consisted of a bitter narcotic substance, similar to opium. M. Macaire found that neither

the roots nor stems of the same plants, when completely detached and immersed, would produce this effect, and hence he concludes that it is an exudation from the roots which takes place only when the plant is in a state of living and healthy growth. Now we can easily understand how it is that plants of one kind will not flourish in the same soil for any length of time. When rooted in the soil, the plant continues to excrete or throw off certain matters which are injurious to it, or which have served their purpose in its economy; and the soil getting charged with these exudations, becomes at last wholly unfit for the plant which has occupied it, though the principles which proved obnoxious to that one, may be nutritious and desirable for plants of another kind. Hence, in clearing the American woods it is found, that if the ground is allowed to run out of tillage, the vegetable tribes which formerly occupied it do not spring up again, but trees of another order and different constitution take possession of the soil; and in the same manner the *salicaria* flourishes in the vicinity of the willow, and the broom-rape in that of the hemp.

Of plants which exercise this influence in a special manner, the fungi are among the most prominent; for wherever any of the tribe take root, they speedily render the soil unfit for their continued growth. The spot thus rendered pernicious to fungous growths is particularly suitable for grasses, and as the fungi disappear, grasses take their place in a rich and luxuriant growth. Here then is the secret of the fairy ring,—the result of one of nature's systems of successive crops.

To pursue the inquiry a step further, and ascertain why grass in preference to other plants should flourish where mushrooms decay, we have only to analyze the latter plant, and a solution immediately presents itself. The ashes of the various kinds of fungi found in fairy rings, yield in analysis small quantities of silica, lime, magnesia, iron, sulphuric acid, carbonic acid, and soda. Potash and phosphoric acid occur also, but in very large proportions, the first amounting to fifty-five per cent. of the entire analysis, and the second to twenty-nine per cent., so as together to constitute the bulk of inorganic constituents. Now phosphorus and potash are the finest of manures for grass; and hence, beside the fact of the soil becoming unfitted for the continuance of fungi, the latter may be partially driven from the field, choked out in fact by the rapid and luxurious growth of grass in the rich soil thus provided for it.

A question of considerable interest arises as to why these growths of herbage should take a circular form, and maintain, as they do, such an uniformity of arrangement and development? This question will be best answered by a consideration of the detailed structure of a fairy ring, and of the nature of the plants which compose it. A circle which has attained some six or eight feet diameter, will be found to contain a considerable variety of the mushroom plants, and several distinct kinds of green herbage. In the centre will be found scattered several of the common edible fungi, and sometimes a few of the rarer species. The most frequent are the *Agaricus campestris*, or common mushroom; *Agaricus oreades*; *A. pratensis*, and *A. muscarius*, or fly agaric, and the champignon. The curious heart-shaped and stemless *Lycoperdon proteus* may also occasionally be found; but the plants most common are the champignons and *Agaricus pratensis*, both of which we have ourselves found in plenty on the rings at Cheshunt, the champignons being of an excellent quality. In the interior of the ring, forming the first portion of the ring from the centre, we find sweet-scented vernal grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*); next that, a broad ring of rank meadow grass; and beyond that, a circle composed of various meadow plants, as glaucous heath grass, common thyme, mouse-ear hawkweed, with occasional sprinklings of *Agaricus virosus* and *Lycoperdon proteus*. Of *A. oreades*, Withering says,—“ I am satisfied that the bare and brown, or highly clothed and verdant circles in pasture fields, called fairy rings, are caused by the growth of this agaric. We have many of them in Edgbaston Park: the largest, which is eighteen feet in diameter, and about as many inches broad in the periphery, where the agarics grow, has existed for some years.

If we suppose then that some few specimens of mushroom spring up,—as they do usually in the droppings of cattle,—and after attaining their full growth scatter their spawn around them, we shall obtain immediately a miniature picture of a fairy ring. The fungi which first took possession of the soil have used up all its phosphorus and potash, and have charged the mould with excretions injurious to themselves. Hence, the crop of fungi which spring from their seeds or spawn, will form a circle all round the spot which was occupied by their predecessors. The centre, deserted by the mushroom, will be taken possession of by grasses, which, rooting in a soil prepared for them, find additional nutriment in the phosphoric acid and potash

which the fungi return to the soil, when they pass into decay. Crop after crop of fungi follow, each one receding from the centre and passing outwards on to new soil, followed up at the same time by the rampant grasses. The central grass will soon have used up the rich deposits formed by the first crop of fungi, and, losing its rankness, will allow of the growth of other meadow plants. Common daisy and other plants will then spring up in the centre, and now and then a few agarics will appear, and other tribes of fungi, now enabled to vegetate in consequence of the refreshment the soil has received from the grass,—the soil being charged with the spawn of various species, waiting only the conditions necessary to their growth. Thus the interior of the ring becomes a mixture of thin grass, meadow and heath plants, and various fungi; and while this has been taking place, the ring of rich and rank grass has been following the outer ring of fungi, luxuriating in the soil which each succeeding crop deserts, and thus extending, by a steady though slow process, the dimensions of the ring itself. In addition also to the suitability of the soil for grass when it has become unfit for fungi, the latter retain the potash and phosphorus of the soil in a collective form for the nourishment of the grass, and take possession of new soil beyond that they previously occupied. The fungi and the grass are then pitched in battle one against the other,—the fight is unequal and the grass conquers; and thus, what it does not gain by the voluntary desertion of the soil by the fungi, it accomplishes by overgrowing and choking them,—continually advancing from within outwards, feeding as it extends itself, upon the remains of its fallen foe.

In the garden of Gilbert White, in the valley at Selbourne, was one of these rings, which had occupied the same spot for six successive years, and perhaps longer; but for that period it had been annually observed, hovering over the green sod on which the old man's feet had often trod, like a fairy oblation to the departed naturalist. Perhaps the circumstance of the fungi being destroyed before they attain perfection, as would naturally be the case on a lawn, may sufficiently account for the ring above mentioned remaining of the same diameter for several seasons. When they occur on hill sides, the lower part of the circle is usually open, and sometimes it happens that, owing to the new crop of fungi which sometimes springs up in the centre, a second ring of very rank grass appears within the the larger one, and forms in this way a very beautiful object. Such

rings as these we have often found on the grassy embankment of the Birmingham Railway, near to the London end of the Primrose Hill tunnel. In 1846, we found a fine ring at Wanstead, in which the common toadstool had taken up its abode, and flourished to the entire exclusion of every other fungus. Only a few weeks since, we found several flourishing rings on Hampstead Heath, which were crowded with the finest of champignons; a vast number of these we gathered, and had the pleasure of making intimate acquaintance with their excellence in the soup which appeared on the table next day. In rich meadows the interior of the ring—at least as far as our own observations go—is usually bare and brown, without trace of fungi of any kind, while the grass surrounding it is of a very rich and luxuriant character. If the plants in the exterior be pulled up, the spawn of the mushrooms will frequently be found attached to their roots, and in the barren interior of the circle, at the depth of two or three inches, the soil will be found saturated with it.

Such is the disenchantment which the fairy ring must undergo; not to the destruction of its beauty, nor to the lessening of our interest in its growth,—but to the exaltation of our views of the vast economy of nature, and of that wisdom which lies behind nature, whose workings are seen to be as perfect and as beautiful in the vast machinery of revolving stars, as in the successive growths of fairy rings. Of old, it was deemed sacrilege to question the mysteries of nature; and to pry into alleged supernatural powers brought shame and suffering in return. Science, supplanting these unseen powers with agencies more subtle and wonders more enchanting, bids us ask and ask again, giving to each trustful question answers full of wonder and full of joy.



THE LOVE OF FLOWERS.

“ Who loves not
 These fairy people of the leafy woods ?
 Children of storm and sun ! climbers of
 The mountain’s side ! or loiterers on the banks
 Of the young rivulet ! The love of flowers
 Is an inherent passion in the heart
 Of man : it never dies.”

“ *Nature*,” by BURLINGTON WALE.

“ Our human souls
 Cling to the grass and water brooks.”

ATHANASE.

THE sentiments of the human heart are instinctive ; they are not the result of observation, study, or education ; they are born with us, and are continually struggling to break forth, and fling their light upon the world, like spring sunshine, when clouds begin to break. Thus it is that the noblest and most elevating sympathies and aspirations of the soul are unteachable, not to be imparted. They can never be infused from without, but lie slumbering within, till they are awakened by the kindred sympathies of beauty and moral worth. Every man’s heart is a well of noble sympathies, and a fountain of the purest affections ; although many, forsooth, get so encased with incrustations of worldliness that their lives become sordid catalogues of apathy and distrust. The love of flowers is one of the most universal sentiments of the heart. In childhood, we roam through lanes and fields, and amid the leafy garniture of woods, to hold communion with their lovely forms, and to listen to their silent language of perfume, till our eyes fill with strange tears of pleasantness. And as we grow into the stern ranks of manhood, and mingle in the busy marts of the world, the heart still cherishes its love for flowers ; and when the spring sunshine falls upon our path, sweet memories come over the spirit, and the heart seems to gush with melodies of its own, babbling wild and disjointed music, like the rippling of a summer brook, or the tones of an Æolian harp, when summer winds play soft and low. And even in hoary age, when time has ploughed deep furrows in our brow, and the snows of life’s winter lie upon our heads, this passion dies not. The eye, which was dim and lustreless, kindles with new light ;

and the step, which was feeble and tottering, becomes firm and steadfast, when nature sheds her sweet influences around us, and of those influences, how fully fraught are flowers.

The love of flowers is but a manifestation of the upward tendencies of the soul, its aspiration for the good, the beautiful, and the true. Such a love will grow in spite of all untoward influences, making holy and pure the bosom wherein it resides, and giving joys, from which the rude clamour of the world is quite estranged, and which sparkle along the pathway of life, like blossoms in the asphodel meadows of Apollo.

Flowers are friends that change not. In youth, they greet us with their sunny smiles; in age, they speak to us of boyhood, and lead us back to the scenes made dear by recollections of home: year after year, as we hasten onward to complete the cycle of our being, they still abide with us, and offer solace to our aching heart. And when sickness and sorrow have broken down the spirit, and we lie down to rest, with the red earth for a pillow, the flowers come in joyful troops to guard our resting place from rash footsteps and unhallowed intrusions. And then the "green grass, and clover, and sweet herbs"—made fragrant by the soft dews and early glances of the sun—sanctify the air which sweeps above our graves; and all day long the grasses wave in the wind, and the flowers sing sweet dirges over the green mounds which mark our resting place; and at night, the sentinel stars come forth to keep watch over us, and the flowers become sorrowful in the still silence, and gush with dewy tears.

Every human heart is a well of pure feeling, an inexhaustible spring of deepest love; albeit its green ways, and quiet avenues may be choked up with misanthropy and care: yet, within that silent chamber are locked up sympathies and aspirations, of which an angel might be proud. Many and great are the struggles of our better life to free itself from the shackles of custom, and to shake off the dust of chicanery and the world's cold disdain. Oh! come with me, thou toiler in the dusty city; shake off the cloud from thy brow; forget for a while, the pence and shillings for which thou hast sold thy soul; and I will lead thee under green forest trees, over soft mossy hillocks, and beside cool running brooks, where the water-flags play with each other, and look at their own merry faces in the glassy stream. Come to the thick brake, and lie down upon the grass till thy soul swells within thee. Stay, the noonday heat will make the blackbird and the

robin silent, and the brown forest will lie dreaming in noonday repose. Now, let thy soul swim out in a broad tide of love, let the tears flow into thine eyes, while gazing upon the fresh moss, and listening to the drowsy hummings of the air. Doth thy heart heave and throe with emotions of thankfulness to God, for making the earth so fair, so redolent of beauty, in its garniture of flowers? and for having scattered these silent teachers up and down the world as orators of perfume, and links of beauty, to bind our souls to nature in all time, and where-soever we may be? The soul must be fed; we must have inspiration from stars, and sunbeams, and flowers; and not be always chewing corn. We must hear the voice of God in the elements, in the winds and the waves, the rattling of the thunder, and the howling of the storm. We must see His face in every flower, and feel his breath in the odour of forest leaves and banks of wild thyme. Now, dost thou not long to be a child once more, and to live out thy days in one frenzy of joy? Wouldst thou shrink from cold hearts, and disappointments, and regrets, and live for the love of flowers only?—to gather round thee glowing visions of floral loveliness; to fill the air with angel shapes and rainbow hues; to breathe an atmosphere of perfume like that which floats over the green pastures of Paradise; to feel the sense overwhelmed with droppings of rich music, as though angel-lutes were tuning their anthems to the Omnipotent; and, amid the grand symphonies of nature, to feel the soul hallowed and becalmed, as a soft wind playing at twilight over a summer sea?

Nature is the property of all. Flowers are the ministers of her commonwealth. They bloom for old and young, rich and poor; and to every true heart become hallowed messengers from heaven! The great duty of flowers is to teach us to be always children, to be ever fresh, and budding into new beauty; for the poetry of our lives is all that can ennoble us, and make earth an abode of peace and loveliness. It is in the morning of existence that

“Hope looks out
Into the dazzling sheen, and fondly talks
Of summer, and Love comes, and all the air
Rings with wild harmonies.”

And shall we, because time has led us a little further towards the tomb, become so engrossed with sordid pursuits as to shun the world of beauty, the creation of poetry, which exists around us in the living semblance of perpetual youth? Oh! “let the blood of the violet

trickle in our veins." Let us mingle with the sweet children of the woods, and hold communings with nature in her own peaceful solitudes. We will lie in green meads where daisies grow, and bask us in the sunshine; lie by the streamlet's brim, and plait rushes, and talk to our own images in the glassy waters; hide in flowery nooks and dingles, and murmur snatches of wild old songs, until we laugh ourselves into a very incarnation of gladness; we'll build our fairy palaces with a geometry of sunbeams, and climb upwards on our dreamy destiny till the universe becomes our temple.

The soul clings to beauty, but it needs a constant intercourse with nature to keep the love of beauty fresh and vigorous within us. How little do they, who rise when the sun is in the mid-heavens, and spend the precious hours in luxury and listlessness, know of the intense charms of which existence is capable; they have no care for the wide-stretching landscape, and the lone river side; they are strangers to the cheering influences which raise the heart to an excess of exhilaration, and give the firm footstep an untiring energy and elasticity; the odour of the wild cannot refresh their languid senses; they cannot lie down upon the broad heath-land, with its wide sheets of purple blossoms glowing in the sunlight, and feel the heart expand with an excess of feeling far too deep for words; the music of many voices they know not; the charms of poetry, and above all of love—love, deep, passionate, and pure—they know not, and existence to them is but a passive and passionless dream. We well remember an old man, we can call to memory his snowy locks, and trembling step, whose early days had been passed in the grassy glades of the New Forest, but whose fate, in later years, had been to linger on in penury between the brick walls of this great city. In a narrow court, amid squalor and wretchedness, where the houses were too close for the sunlight ever to fall upon the ground, and where, on the brightest day in June, only a thin wretched strip of blue appeared above, had this old man passed the latest years of his life; but he never forgot the haunts and recollections of his childhood—the old woods, the giant trees, and the flowers of dingle and dell; and when in May, the little children wandered out from their wretched homes, to breathe the pure air of heaven in the golden meadows, his eyes would glisten with delight to accept their little gifts of buttercups and daisies, and many times have we seen him in an exultation of feeling, at the remembrance of the scenes and associations of his

childhood, till he seemed choking with emotion, and suffused with silent tears. So deep in the heart is the love of flowers, that, once awakened, it becomes the well-spring of a renewed and beautiful existence. Let us then live on flowers from the fields, and golden beams of the blue ether!

It was the love of flowers which gave tone and vigour to the poets of old, and made their pages redolent with perfume and loveliness. The wisdom of Solomon was so much the greater that he loved flowers, and it is the same sentiment which embalms the pages of Spenser, Chaucer, Clare, Carrington, Gilbert White, and Chatterton, and makes them teem with living beauty, and a lustre, like unclouded sunshine in the month of June. If the love of flowers was not inherent in our hearts, we should not feel the freshness and brilliancy of their descriptions of nature, sweeping over the spirit like a fragment of old music, or breathings from a blossom-scented valley. Now we can go away to the silvery streams in company with old Izaak Walton, where the whirling currents play with the reeds and water-flags, and the green willows bow low to kiss the flowing stream; then we remember the milkmaid, and the draught of cow's-milk; the shelter under the honeysuckle hedge; the fish fried in cowslips; the little sleeping-room, smelling sweetly of lavender; and the flowers, which old Izaak thought too beautiful to be seen at any other times than holidays. The good old fellow delighted in his angle, and he learnt to love nature all the more, and although we regard angling as an unnecessary and wanton cruelty, in itself destitute of poetry, yet we love the old man, who in the innocence of his heart could sing:—

“ I in these flowery meads would be,
These crystal streams should solace me;
To whose harmonious, babbling noise,
I, with my angle, would rejoice.”

If we could have walked with him once or twice on his rambles, we would have taught him by the simple lesson of a flower, that he could enjoy the pleasures of rippling brooks, and blue sunshine, while the finny creatures of the pools were left to sport away their lives in peace.

Pleasant it is to wander forth, as did Solomon of old, “into the fields, or to lodge in the villages, to see the fruits of the valley, and to go into the gardens and gather lilies;” and to inhale the perfumes of the banks and fields. The people of Oriental climes have the love of nature more deeply infused into their hearts than

those of cold and cloudy lands; there, nature lavishes her beauties with a tenfold profusion and loveliness, the blood flows more freely in the veins, and the hearts of men beat with a warmer enthusiasm. The royal garden of an eastern prince is called the "Garden of God," a name which is usually supposed to refer to the Garden of Eden, and a promise adapted to the love of nature and of virtue. To the faithful follower of the Prophet, the Koran promised greetings of "good tidings, gardens through which rivers flow, and ye shall remain therein for ever."

From the first dawning of the world, the love of flowers has grown within the heart of humanity, and, to woman, has been a life-like consolation, and a hope, steadfast and true. Our first mother, when breathing out her life in a long dream of joy in that happy garden, fresh and fair from the hands of God, as a bud laved by unsunned drops of silver dew, communed with the forms of loveliness which lent their charms to beautify her happy home; and flowers, as visible symbols of purity and holiness, were endeared to her in deep and passionate love, and she breathed out her soul in harmony with their hallowed perfume. But, oh! what pain and torture for her heart when, as the requiting of her own sin, with the sole companion of her bosom, she was banished from that abode of peace, to sojourn in the plains and valleys of an unknown world! Well might her sorrowing heart pour out its woe in tears and vain regrets—

"Must I then leave thee, Paradise? thus leave
Thee, native soil! these happy walks and shades,
Fit haunts of Gods!

* * * * *

O flowers,
That never will in other climates grow;
My early visitation, and my last
At even, which I bred up with tender hand
From the first opening buds, and gave ye names:
Who now shall rear ye to the sun, or rank
Your tribes, and water from the ambrosial fount?"

MILTON.

Such a love is in every woman's heart, and if unchecked, would tend to the development of the highest social and domestic virtues, and would secure, by a natural and unyielding bond, a recognition of that ideal beauty, and personification of virtue, which is the permanent basis of all social comfort, and the unity of the highest individual and domestic relations.

The flowers of the wild have ever a greater hold upon the affections than the nurtured beauties of the garden or conservatory. Wild flowers form a chief part of the love of country, they are our associates in early life, and recal, in after years, the scenes and recollections of our youth ; they are the true philanthropists of nature, and their generous and smiling faces, give us kindly greetings and sweet memories of the first impulses of love and friendship ; they bloom for all who care to seek them, and smile in the summer's sun, and brave the winter's sleet right valiantly, bonnily and true. The poor mechanic may leave his dull bench when Sunday comes, and breathe the fresh air on the green hills, and gather cowslips and daffodils to cheer him, and to teach him, that although his frame may be begrimed and emaciated by the toil of weekly drudgery, yet he has within him a soul capable of feeling, and a spirit which can woo the inspiration of nature, and grow green again in the love of flowers. And why else were wild flowers sent if not to teach and soothe us by their æsthetic loveliness, no less than by their hues and odours, and the links of beauty which they throw around our hearts. "What God has created, that call thou not useless," and wherefore shall we become heedless of them, albeit that they neither feed our stomachs nor clothe our backs, enough that they are beautiful, and that all beauty is the soul's special inheritance; the heart must have something to love or it becomes desolate, and the wild flowers of the field are ministers from heaven to teach us love, and to kindle holy sympathies in our breasts—

" And such are daffodils

With the green world they live in : and clear rills

That for themselves a cooling covert make

'Gainst the hot season : the mid forest brake,

Rich with a sprinkling of fair musk-rose blooms."

KEATS.

Of all things sent from heaven to minister to man's happiness, flowers are the most gentle, confiding, and unresisting; he may crush them beneath his footstep, and their only murmurs are made in the sweet scent which they immediately emit; they still smile in his face and love him as tenderly as before; they may be plucked and scattered to the four winds of heaven, but a fresh troop bloom in gladness and delight; they may be gathered by the soft white hand of beauty, to gladden the eye which has never known a tear, and by the hard and

iron hand of toiling industry to perfume and beautify a close and murky dwelling-place.

It was the awakening of the sentiment of love for flowers which brought back the prisoner of Fenestrella to the acknowledgment of a God; maddened by solitude, and exhausted by profligacy, and the unceasing anxieties of a troubled soul, he denied his Maker, and cast himself into the black and desolate regions of infidelity; but, while expiating, within the walls of a prison, for the rash impetuosities of his youth, a little flower springs up between the chinks of the stones, and becomes to him a messenger of love and mercy, while his soul is on the very threshold of moral despair. So, too, was the heart of the botanist, Douglas, cheered in his toilsome wanderings in America, when he met with a blooming primrose high up on the bald summit of a rocky mountain, where the clouds rolled in darkness, and mingled their dense whiteness with the giant masses of eternal snow. The explorers of the rocky mountains of the west were, in a like manner, comforted, and reminded of the flowery valleys and fertile plains which they had left far behind them, when, amid the desolate and barren hills, where not even a blade of grass was to be seen for miles, they saw a little bee, humming along as if in quest of flowers, and in a region many thousand feet above the level of the sea. "Who has forgotten the exultation of Vaillant over a flower in the torrid wastes of Africa? or the affecting mention of the influence of a flower upon the mind of Mungo Park, in the time of suffering and despondency, in the heart of the same savage country?" *

Schimmelpenninck † tells an anecdote of the philosopher of Geneva, which illustrates, in a pleasing manner the close bond of union between mind of the highest order and the simple beauties of nature. During the earliest and happiest years of the life of Rousseau, he was one day walking with a beloved friend. It was summer time, the evening was calm, quiet, and serene. The sun was setting in glory, and spreading his sheeted fires over the western sky, and upon the unrippled surface of the lake; making the still water transparent with a vivid and glowing light. The friends sat on a soft, mossy bank, enjoying the calm loveliness of the scene, and conversing upon the varied phases of human life, in the unaffected sincerity of true friendship. At their

* Anne Pratt.

† "Theory of Beauty and Deformity."

feet was a bright tuft of the lovely Germander speedwell, covered with a profusion of brilliant blue blossoms. Rousseau's friend pointed to the little flower, the *veronica chamædrys*, as wearing the same expression of cheerfulness and innocence, as the scene before them. Thirty years passed away ! Care-worn, persecuted, disappointed, acquainted with poverty and grief, known to fame, but a stranger to peace, Rousseau again visited Geneva. On such a calm and lovely evening as, thirty years before he had conversed with the friend of his bosom, and had received a teaching from the simple beauty of a flower, he again was seated on the selfsame spot. The scene was the same. The sun went down in golden majesty ; the birds sung cheerfully in the soft light ; the crimson clouds floated solemnly in the western sky ; and the waters of the lake were skimmed by glittering boats. But the house wherein the first feelings of love and friendship, and the first fruits of his genius had budded, was now levelled with the ground. His dearest friend was sleeping in the grave. The generation of villagers who had partaken the bounty of the same beneficent hand was passed away, and none remained to point out the green sod where that benefactor lay. He walked on pensively, the same bank, tufted with the same knot of bright-eyed speedwell, caught his eye. The memories of past years of trouble and sorrow came upon him, he heaved a sigh, and turned away, weeping bitterly.

“ The plant that bloomed along the shore,
Where there in happier hours he strayed,
Still flourished gaily as before,
In all its azure charms arrayed ;
There still it shone in modest pride,
While all *his* flowers of joy had died.

It seemed to say, ‘ Hadst thou, like me,
Contented bloom’d within the bed
That Nature’s hand had formed for thee,
When first her dews were on thee shed,
Then had thy blossoms never known
The blasts that o’er their buds have blown.”

It is because flowers are such lovely emblems of innocence, so like the merry face of childhood, that they have a large place, in our best affections. They ever remind us of our days of boyhood and buoyancy ; when nature, our fond mother, sat upon the hills, clapping her hands with joy, and giving us all the earth, with its landscapes and rocks,

and hills and forests, for our school and play-ground; when quiet nooks enclosed us with their greenness, and we found companions in the wild bee, and the morning breezes, and in everything which wore the impress of beauty, whether animate or inanimate; when all things were clothed with beauty, and were worshipped with a veneration beyond utterance; when each leaf and flower was a palace of sweet sights and scents, and the bending boughs were woven into fairy bowers of enchantment, and touched us with heaven's own glorious sunshine; when we picked up lessons of love and delight by river sides, by brooks, and hawthorn paths, in quiet glens and in green fields, and inhaled, from every passing breeze, health, intelligence, and joy; when all things grew and expanded into broad and living hope, calm, lovely, promising, and serene, as a bright vision by a sick man's bed. And then, too, the holy memories which they embalm in their folded buds and undewed chalices—memories fraught with sorrow, but not less welcome to our hearts. Tender recollections, perchance of parents now sleeping in green repose in the ivied churchyard, though far divided from us by a gulf of worldly cares and sordid interests, no longer controlling our actions with a judicious watchfulness and care, no longer checking us as we are about to pluck the fatal weeds of folly, and to inhale the breath of the sinful blossoms which pleasure scatters in our path—beautiful and fragrant, but fraught with the bane of misery—luring us to tarry in voluptuous bowers, and steep our souls in sensual delights, where repentance and self-reproach, for precious time thus squandered and irrevocably lost, come upon us as a reward, and give, in return for excess of light, a maddening despair and blindness.

“ Oh, lovely flowers! the earth's rich diadem,
Emblems are ye of heaven, and heavenly joy,
And starry brilliance in a world of gloom;
Peace, innocence, and guileless infancy
Claim sisterhood with you, and holy is the tie.”

MRS. HEMANS.

And what so pure and worthy of our love as the sweet flowers which bloom along our pathway, ever seeking to find a place in our bosoms, and to blend by association of ideas, the experiences with the pleasures of life; refreshing the worn mind with waters from the untainted fountain of pure feeling, which flows from the emerald meadows of childhood, and leading us from the world's thorny and flowerless

desert to a mirage of green olives and living oases ! How often, when disease has wasted the frame, and anxiety and suffering have well nigh done their work, the sufferer awaits calmly the approaching dissolution, and stands, pausing on the brink of another world in majestic hope and confidence—the joys, sorrows, and fears of life's fevered dream all unheeded and banished from the memory—and the scenes and associations of childhood come flooding upon the memory in all their pristine freshness and beauty ! The soul, as it grows near to God, becomes more pure and holy ; and the love of flowers breaks forth in a new and tenfold beauty, even when the body is ready for its rest ; for flowers are antetypes of the angelic, tokens of the perfect, the peaceful, and the just.

It was the beloved and much lamented L. E. L. who sung—

“ We like the mockery that flowers
Exhibit on the mound
Beneath which lie the happy hours
Hearts dreamt, but never found.”

It was the gentle-hearted Keats—the pure soul—

“ Who grew
Like a pale flower by some sad maiden cherished,
And fed with true-love tears instead of dew—”

who said, when on the couch of death, and before he passed into the skies like the dew-drop exhaled from the bosom of a flower, that he “felt the daisies already growing over him.” And so, too, Carrington, who suffered the disappointments and regrets of a weary and a toilsome life, was compelled to say, that

“ Songs may cease,
Though carolled in the faithless Spring, and Hope
May prove a flatterer, and Love may plume
His wings for flight, and every flower that blows
Be blasted by the tempest's breath.”

Mrs. Hemans believed that “ the fine passion for flowers is the only one which long sickness leaves untouched with its chilling influence. Often, during this weary illness of mine, have I looked upon new books with indifference, when, if a friend has sent me a few flowers, my heart has leaped up to their dreamy hues and odours, with a

sudden sense of renovated childhood, which seems to me one of the mysteries of our being."

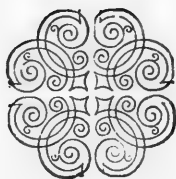
Flowers are such living types of loveliness and innocence, and of all that is pleasing and graceful, that the poet would be bereft of his most beautiful images if they were to perish. We must cease, says Mr. Adams, to compare young lips to blushing roses, and white brows to unspotted lilies. We must cease to regard winning eyes as violets half hidden under broad leaves, but peeping out in the sunshine to laugh right merrily. The sweet voice of her we love would no longer be as a soft breeze, kissing its way through twined roses or sheltered hawthorns. We could no longer welcome the young soul into the world with tokens of flowers, or make the graves of the beloved holy and beautiful by green hillocks and sprinklings of blossoms, and which are emblems to us of the eternal summer beyond the grave, where amid the starry fields of that world of beauty, flowers bloom on for ever, and never—never fade!

The physical history of our world teaches us that flowers were created for spiritual, rather than material purposes. They were sent by God to give us constant revelations of the beautiful, and to keep us in the perpetual presence of innocence and virtue. Geology tells us that in those dim and distant eras of our world's history, prior to the creation of man, the earth was peopled with mighty monsters, and strange moving forms, and dense black forest jungles. Then the mammoth and the mastodon shook the old woods with their ponderous footsteps. There were giant ferns waving their rich green fronds in the morning air, tall trees of every hue and shade, uplifting their heads proudly to the blue heaven. Brakes and brackens matted and interwoven, and tenanted by the jackal, the shaggy bison, and the sabre-toothed tiger. There were deep forest fastnesses where the luxuriant trees locked themselves together overhead, and were clothed with foliage so thick and close, that the sunlight never pierced through them; but a dim twilight shadow reigned about the massive boles, and the ground below, where the fallen leaves were piled in thick masses, was at mid-day enveloped in the gloom of night. Yet, although there were birds of gorgeous plumage, and trees and shrubs in unnumbered forms of greatness and majesty, there were no lovely flowers! All the blossoms which grew in the subterranean forests of the then half-formed world were destitute of beauty, or like those of ferns or mosses,

scarcely to be seen. And why so? Because flowers were to fulfil a mission of moral poesy and truth, and to fill the soul of man with beauty; but until he should come to inhabit a world which was henceforth to be his own, flowers were not needed, and hence did not exist. Then, when the fulness of time had come for him to take up his abode on the world which had just burst into new life, he was to wake, as it were, into an existence surfeited with loveliness; for "the Lord God planted a Garden eastward in Eden, and there he put the man to dress it and to keep it." And so the great mover of the universe has bountifully given us these perfumed forms of loveliness, as teachers of love and faith, and to fill the heart with beauty and with joy. Oh! man, without flowers thy days would be as the barren dust of the desert, and nature would spurn thee, instead of wooing thee to kiss her and love her as a bride. Learn then, how, amid blood-stained revolutions, and the overthrow of empires, amid the destruction of palaces and lofty columns, and statues of marble and of bronze, the simple flowers of the field bloom on, and grow again and again into new beauty, and multiply for ever. The spots where temples and altars have stood, and where throbbing hearts have bowed fervently at the shrines of God, become at last green mounds of grass and ivy, and wild daisies and tangled copses of roses and brambles; for time, who hurls down the strong battlement and buries the consecrated shrine in dust, cannot stop the blooming of the humble flower which grows upon the ruined keep, or between the crumbling stones of the fallen tower. Though he may dig the graves of nations, and hurl the proudest monument to ruin, yet spring comes again to the spot made sacred by memories of the past, and scatters flowers in profusion as tokens of the supremacy of nature.

Then no longer, O man! like Dido of old, make a fire for thine own immolation; look not so far through gloom and darkness for a shining Eden; for flowers—emblems of all love and charity—are blooming at thy very feet! Learn to live like Plato, ever in the contemplation of the FIRST GOOD and the FIRST FAIR, and to die like Goethe, asking for increase of light! Then shall thy soul awaken to a life more beauteous and fair, to a land of green pastures where the wrecks of autumn are unknown, where the chills of winter fall not, but where perpetual summer blooms, with its plenitude of odorous flowers, under the sustaining breath of the ETERNAL. And as the

spirit steps out into the splendours of this new life, it will be greeted by the hosannahs of glorified souls, swelling through the dim infinitude, upward and upward, ever grand, vast, and orbicular; it will catch glimpses of the silvery rivers of Eden, shaded by ever-verdant trees, and fringed with flowers of eternal bloom, and will join its own melodies with the Æolian harpings of gentle seraphs ever, evermore!



FLORAL ANTIQUITIES OF THE EAST.

“Twining the floweret in her rainbow wreath,
She bore it followed by the golden beam
To bygone ages and to distant climes.”

SOMETHING of the beautiful yet remains to man, something of the fair and good, to cheer the hours of the present, and serve as emblems of the future and the past. We talk of the gone-time as if dreams and shadows only peopled it—as if the spirits of the great moved amid forms of darkness—dealing only with their dreams; while we look forward through a hope whose atmosphere is rosy, and with many beatings of the heart and pulse, believe in the reality of the future. Yet the present is but another leaf unfolding on the tree of time; the future will be but a leaf added, and added too, as leaves are out of doors, certainly, but imperceptibly. The present is the only reality, and love as we may those reveries in which the past comes back in shadow, we may at least receive it as a reality for the time, and go back to it over a path of flowers. The future is a cloud, the past is a cloud also, but in it there are gaps of sunshine, and between its wreathing folds we see glimpses of men and women—breathing forms of thought—here struggling, there embracing; here pining under false faith, and despotism and savagery; there giving the soul room to grow in an atmosphere of love, kneeling together before shrines of light. There are burning sands and rocky heights, and giant caverns where darkness crouches, and blood trickles unseen. Temples, altars, and sickening cities where death holds carnival; and over all are wreaths of flowers, twining, creeping,—in thick bowers of fragrance, in lovely forms of green leafiness, in mossy slopes, and shady coolness and delightful umbrage. “Flowers foreshadow the future,” but they guide us through the past; lead the way into its dark recesses, and point us to the birthplaces of the holiest influences. Strangely, but truly, do flowers mingle in all the events and passions of the world, refreshing the heart of man with their greenness, and binding life and love together by plaited wreaths of beauty. Strangely, but truly, do these plaited wreaths unwind from columns which have crumbled in

their embrace ; strangely do they fall off, sere and withered, from the stony faces of the temples and idols of the past ; and more strangely still a fresh group spring up there to hide the ghastly ruins from the sun, and to throw over the white bones and powdered granite a warm hue of life, making the two ends of the world meet as they do often on the cheek of beauty,—life, fresh and beautiful above ; death, with his stony eye, lurking underneath.

And yet those fallen altars, those crumbling monuments, those lands dyed with the blood of the brave, and sprinkled with fragments as with flakes of snow, still hide under their coverings of flowers the records of many generations of men, with whose lives such flowers as those were twined, and of whose acts and thoughts and impulses, those very flowers can repeat the history.

It was one of the redeeming traits of the old mythologies, that floral ornaments, sacrifices of herbs, and allegorical combinations of fruits and flowers were regarded as aids to worship, or as symbols of the divine idea, or even as mediators between humanity kneeling in the dust, and the Supreme Being, throned upon a million worlds. India, with its memorials of blood and tyranny and fanaticism, looks even less fearful when its rites are seen to be surrounded with these mute poetic forms. The mighty Bhyroe, the Assura or evil spirit, gains something in the midst of his enormities, when his granite idol is seen adorned with flowers, * the offerings of the kneeling children of Brahma. The sacrifice of fire to all the gods, the third of the five great Hindoo sacrifices, with its impressive solemnity becomes still more solemn when the priest, after many prayers and holy services, places the vessel containing the sacred fire on the spot consecrated to it ; and then sprinkles around it the green blades of the cusa grass, † and sitting on the ground pronounces the name of the earth inaudibly. Then after reciting a sacred mantra, more blades of cusa are placed around the fire, the sacred butter is poured upon the flame, and he sits down with his face towards the east, and meditates on Brahma, the Lord of the Creation. ‡ The grass is the key to the symbol, and while hinting that man is still close to nature, upholds the mystery

* Jablouski, *Egyptian Pantheon*.

† *Poa Cynosuroides*.

‡ Colebrooke on the Religion of the Hindoos.—*Asiatic Researches*, Vol. vii, No. 8.

as a consecration of the powers of the world, as visible emblems of the Lord of all things.

Thus, through all the mythologies and symbol images of the old world, the green things continually peep out, adding to the wild beauty of these aboriginal forms, which, begot in the infancy of the world, are full of that freshness of feeling, that love of allegory and symbol which characterises infancy in the individual man. In these devotions there is a largeness of character which shames the contracted piety of our own day and generation, and much as we may dread the features of those ancient faiths, and shrink, horror struck, from their details of barbarity and absurdity, we must at least confess that faith had there a home. The legend of Rawana the good Brahmin, exhibits, in a powerful light, the sincerity of that age of idols. It was the wont of Rawana to offer daily one hundred flowers to the god Ixora ; and once, to prove his zeal, the god secretly took from the sacrifice one of the flowers, and then complained that the gift was too small. Rawana counted the flowers, and finding only ninety-nine, offered one of his eyes to supply its place, when the god, convinced of his piety, restored the flower, and blessed him for his confiding faith.

Soma, the moon, is, in the Indian mythology, as in those of the northern nations of Europe, a male deity ; he is "born of the sun ;" and is the king of herbs and flowers. "Rain is produced from the Moon," says the Rigveda ;* and a Hindoo commentator on this passage says, "Rain enters the lunar orb, which consists of water." This connection of the moon with the changes of the weather is recognised by Shakspeare, who calls her the "Governess of the floods," † and is a meteorological tradition. The Hindoos represent Soma as the god of showers and green things ; when he descends in his car drawn by antelopes, bearing in his bosom a sleeping fawn, he typifies the irregular motion of the moon itself, and the dependence of vegetation upon it for the necessary fluctuations of the weather. Barbarous as were the old Hindoo rites, the laws of hospitality were sacred among them ; and he who planted a tope or grove, or opened a well and surrounded it with trees for the shade and refreshment of the traveller, was held for ever after a descendant of the gods. Timul Naik Ruja of Tanjora, became a deity for having built a choultry or rest-

* Asiatic Researches, vol viii. p. 406.

† Midsummer Night's Dream.

ing place for pilgrims near the pagoda of Mandura; and to the neglect of these acts of benevolence by the wealthy British residents of Hindustan, the difficulties of Christianity have been increased ten-fold, the Christian being regarded as selfish and uncharitable.

Among the plants sacred to the religion of the Hindoos, the cusa or cusha grass holds an important place. It is the *poa cynosuroides* of Linnæus: its leaves are long, acutely jagged downwards, but smooth on the other parts, and so sharp and tapering as to furnish the Hindoos with a favourite metaphor, in which it represents acuteness of intellect. The fruit-stalk of this grass rises about two feet from the ground, and is terminated by a panicle or head composed of brilliant blood-red flowers.* To its beauty it doubtless owes its sacred character, for the Hindoos suppose every object to be animated by a spirit or divinity, and those which are most excellent or remarkable, to be inhabited by spirits of the highest order, or by gods. The blood-red colour of the flowers of the cusa, is frequently assigned as the origin of its use in sacrifices; though Sir William Jones, the highest authority on such a subject, believes that its name of cusha is derived from Cush, the father of the Hindoo race; and hence it is regarded in the rites of Brahma, as a memorial of the patriarch-father of the people.† The Cushites or descendants of Cush came into Egypt under the name of Aurilæ and Shepherds, as also Ethiopians; hence Egypt also inherited that name. The Cushites, styled Æthiopes, were the original inhabitants of India, and wherever any portion of the history of the Cushites appears, the name of India will be found likewise.‡ The reverence in which this grass was held originated the Indian custom of biting a blade of grass in token of submission, and in asking for quarter in the field of battle—

“ Her spear, not e'en Mahisha dare despise :
The grass is bitten by her enemies.” §

The cusa was also used in the preparation of the noviciate for the pronounciation of the most holy word in the creed of India. “ Brahma

* As. Res. iv.—*Martyn Millar's Dict.*

† Diodorus Siculus, i, 17. Bryant's Analysis, iii, 212.

‡ Philostrati vita Apollon, iii, 125.

§ Metamorphosis of Sona, v, 878, St. John's Indian Archipelago, i.

milked out, as it were, from the three Vedas, the letter A, the letter U, and the letter M; which form by coalition the tri-lateral monosyllable" *Aum*,* pronounced Om, which is "the symbol of God, the Lord of created beings." Each of the three compound letters of this word has its mysterious signification. The first denotes Brahma, the second Vishnu, and the third Siva. This syllable is never pronounced by the Hindoos, except inaudibly, or as it were, inwardly, and never without many vigils and solemn preparations. "If he have sitten on cushions of cusa, with their points towards the east, and be purified by rubbing that holy grass in both his hands, and be further prepared by three suppressions of the breath, he may then fitly pronounce OM."† This term appears to have originated the Egyptian OM, the sun, and OMPHI, an oracle, or presage of futurity. Plutarch‡ says *ομφις* was the name of an Egyptian deity. The true rendering, according to Bryant§, is Omphi or Amphi, from Ham, who was worshipped as the Sun or Osiris. The mountains where these oracles were delivered, were called Har-al-Ompi, from which the Greeks obtained Olympus, or from its oracular prerogatives, *ορος Ολυμπου*. Among the Armenians the same was called ON, EON, or AON; hence it was that Ham, who was worshipped as the sun, got the title of Amon, and Ammon, and was styled Baal-Hamon. It is said of Saul that he had a vineyard at Baal-Hamon," || a name probably given to the place by his Egyptian wife, the daughter of Pharoah.

Another grass, called Durva, ¶ is also held as sacred, and in the mysteries of the temple, regarded as the symbol of fecundity. Its flowers, when in their perfect state, are amongst the most lovely objects in the vegetable world. Viewed through a microscope, they appear like clusters of minute rubies and emeralds in constant motion, and with innumerable changes of light and colour. It is the sweetest and most nutritious pasture for cattle, and so readily propagated by its creeping roots, that lands sown with pieces of them become completely swarded in a single season. Its extraordinary powers of increase render it an emblem of the reproductive powers of nature. In the worship of the divine Chrishna, or Heri, as he is termed by the

* Menu., chap. ii, 76.

† Ibid, ii, 75.

‡ Isis and Osiris.

§ Analysis i, 235.

|| Canticles viii.

¶ *Agrostis linearis* of Linnæus.

poet Jayadeva,* the plant represents—in connection with forms which to Europeans appear grossly licentious, but which, to the devout Hindoo are holy allegories—the producing powers of the universe, the endless source of Nature and of Being.

Another plant, which the idolatrous worshippers of Brahma venerate, is the vata or sacred fig, of which there are several varieties.† These are all holy plants, the pippala or *ficus religiosa*, being the most sacred of them all.‡ This species has perhaps a higher claim than any other to be regarded as sacred on account of its curious growth and the manner in which it extends itself over the soil. Its branches spread very wide, about eighteen or twenty feet from the stem, and then, bending down, the extremities thicken, and continually approach nearer to the earth; when they reach the ground they put forth roots, and each branch becomes a stem or trunk, growing to the size of the largest European oaks or elms. The branches, having thus become trees, again shoot out branches bending down, and rooting as before, still extending themselves often till the whole plant covers a very large space of ground. One of these grove-like trees growing on an island in the Nerbudda river, about ten miles from Barouch, in the province of Guzerat, has three hundred and fifty principal stems, each as large as timber trees; and these occupy a space two thousand feet in circumference, and the branches, whose hanging extremities have not yet reached the ground, extend much farther. This tree was once much larger than it is at present, for many of the stems have been carried off by the floods of the river, which have washed away part of the soil of the island. The natives affirm, that it is three thousand years old, and very possibly it may be; since, when any of the older central stems decay and leave a vacant space, this is in time re-occupied by fresh stems, produced by the branches growing and rooting, as in the outer side of the grove. A plant possessing such properties as these, may be justly termed immortal. Sanctity is very probably ascribed to this tree, because of its aptness to represent the emanation of living things from the parent, or creator, Brahma, who, having received the principle of life from the great supreme Brahme, produced, by a succession of agents, all the

* Gitagovinda.

† *Ficus religiosa*, *Ficus Bengalensis*, and *Ficus Indica*, are the principal.

‡ As. Res. iv, 27.

worlds, and all creatures, both animate and inanimate. * The Brahmins, however, assign a reason for the sanctity of this plant, more suited to the understanding of the vulgar; and affirm, that Vishnu, the preserver, was born under its shade. Under this legend is couched an ingenious allegory, significative of the salutary shade afforded by its branches, impervious to the rays of the sun. On account of the reputed sanctity of the tree, pagodas or temples are commonly erected beneath, or contiguous to its shade; in some instances, one of these trees is planted within the area of the principle court of the pagoda. † The yogis, or religious ascetics, practise their austerities near it for the same reason, and any injury done to a twig or leaf is considered as a crime scarcely less atrocious than murder. Both the other species of the ficus, though less remarkable in their growth than the ficus Indica, resemble it in the rooting of their extreme branches, and are held sacred probably for that very reason; though some ascribe the sanctity of the ficus religiosa to the brown colour of the female flowerets, which bears some allusion to the preserver Vishnu.

But the most sacred of plants in the Indian mythology is the lotos, equally revered by Hindoos, Egyptians, Chinese, and Javanese, and associated with the most remarkable events in their cosmogonies, traditions, and creeds. In the religious services, and in the Sanscrit hymns and legends the lotos is a frequent subject of simile and comparison. Lacshmi, the goddess of plenty, the sacti or wife of the protector Vishnu, is sometimes known by the names of Pedma and Camala, in allusion to the holy and increasing lotos. The author of the *Metamorphoses of Sona* frequently uses it to help out his classical allegories, describing the charms of Nerbudda he says,

“ See graceful wave the lotos stalk her arms;
Strive not vain bracelet to improve her charms;
Fair lotos flowers, her taper fingers glow,
Tinged bright by lacsha, ‡ like each slender toe.”

This, like many others in the above poem, is borrowed from the

* Menu, chap. i.

† As. Res. Vol. v. No. 20.

‡ Another wood-nymph pressed the juice of lacsha, to dye her feet exquisitely red.—*SACONTOLA*, Act. iv, scene 1.

Gitagovinda—"Madhava binds on her arms, graceful as the stalks of the water-lily [lotos], adorned with hands glowing like the petals of its flowers, a bracelet of sapphires." In the description of Deva, the lover of Nerbudda, the image occurs in a more beautiful form in allusion to the powdered appearance of the lotos flower—

"Light graceful from his waist the jammah flows,
Thus on the lotus blue the gold dust shows."

And in another passage, where Nerbudda despatches her slave, Johilla, to observe if the Deva be coming "in due array," she commands her to observe if he be

"Such as becomes Nerbudda's birth and fame."

Commanding her to note,

"If, lion-like, his port be bold and brave;
If the blue lotos blossom on his face;
If his form wear the palm's aspiring grace."

The history of the lotos, though of highest importance as a key to many of the symbols and ceremonies of antiquity, is surrounded by many difficulties; yet this difficulty arises not in the fabulous details to which this plant is related, but in the intense reality of its uses and associations. Hindostan is the birth-place of the lotus, as it is also of the chief features in classical tradition and history. The lotos of Indian differs from that of Grecian, and that of Grecian from that of Roman mythology, though the lotos of India is the truly sacred plant from which the others derive both name and literary importance, and sacred investments. In Egypt the plant known as the lotos is the same in kind as that revered in India, and is a species of water-lily, called, in botany, *nymphæa*. The lotos of the Greek and Roman writers is falsely so called, for, of the true nature of the lotus they were unacquainted. Herodotus, however, who proves correct in all questions of fact, wherein he gives a statement on the authority of his own experience, most correctly describes the lotos of Egypt as a lily of the *nymphæa* species. Its botanic name is traceable to its place of growth, as it flourishes in bays and inlets of fresh water, and on the broad waters of great rivers, where a rich mud lies near the surface. The Greeks, borrowing their idea of the lotos from Homer,

describe it as the produce of a shrub. The lotos of Homer, however, is distinct from that of ancient India and Egypt, and it is slightly probable that, when Homer sang, it was known in Greece only by name. It could not have been the Egyptian water-lily which formed the bed of Jupiter and Juno, according to Homer; nor could the horses of Achilles have regaled themselves upon its herbage. It could not have been any species of nymphæa which so enchanted the companions of Ulysses when they landed on

“The land of lotos and the flowery coast;”

For, in describing the resources of the inhabitants of this region, the poet says,

“The *trees* around them all their fruit produce,
Lotos the name, divine, nectareous juice.” *

Ovid makes the same mistake, or rather, adopts an error which had become very prevalent in his day; for, in his elegant fable of Dryope, he derives the name of the lotos from the nymph who escapes from the lawless lust of Priapus:—

“Not distant far a watery lotos grows;
The spring was new, and all the verdant boughs
Adorned with blossoms, promised fruits that vie
In glowing colours with the Tyrian dye.
* * * * * *
Upon the tree I cast a frightful look,
The trembling tree with sudden horror shook.
Lotos the nymph (if rural tales be true),
As from Priapus’ lawless lust she flew,
Forsook her form; and fixing there, became
A flowery plant, which still preserves her name.” †

There Ovid describes the lotos as a tree with “verdant boughs;” and Theophrastus, in his fourth book, makes reference to it in similar

* Pope is inclined to believe that it is this kind of lotos which the companions of Ulysses tasted, and which was the reason why they were overcome with it; for, being a wine, it intoxicated them.

† Lotis, or lotus, a beautiful nymph, daughter of Neptune. Dryope, a virgin, Æchalia, beloved by Apollo, and afterwards married to Andræmon, was said to have been changed into a lotos.

terms, describing it as a tree; but, in his details, he is more correct, where he describes its fruit as resembling a bean, and makes reference to it as an immortal plant—an idea essentially Indian in character. Strabo, in his seventeenth book, also refers to it, and states that Syrtes on the Mediterranean, as well as Menynx, were said to be lotophagitis. The compass of the gulf, which modern geographers represent as composed of two immense sand banks, comprised, according to Strabo, about sixteen hundred furlongs, the breadth of the mouth being six hundred; and it was extremely fertile in the growth of the lotos. But Strabo, whose accuracy is seldom impeachable, represents the lotos as a tree, and says that Menynx was the country of the lotophagi, or those that feed on lotos trees, of which Homer makes mention; and further informs us that monuments of Ulysses, as well as his altar, remain there; and that the country abounds with lote-trees, the fruit of which is exceedingly sweet. The account of Strabo is confirmed by Pliny,* who describes the lote-trees as growing in abundance on the two sand banks of the Mediterranean, though Pliny was well acquainted with the distinction between this and the true Egyptian lotos. It is needless to repeat minute and copious narrative here; suffice it that the "lote-trees" of these later authors, which are doubtless identical with the thorny shrub discovered in Africa by Mungo Park, is distinct from the true lotos of antiquity, and deserves none of the honours which have been heaped upon it by authors who were misled by its spurious name. The plant described by Herodotus is not only the true lotos of eastern antiquity, but, in its essential character as a plant, has the highest claim to symbolical uses. It is one of the plants indigenous to the mud of the Nile, and grows plentifully also in the great streams of India. It is a plant of great beauty, closely allied in botanical properties to the water lily of Britain; its roots creep along the bottoms of lakes and rivers, and are fleshy bulbous masses, containing a mass of white pulp, as Pliny saith, "delicious to eat." It is a stately and majestic creature of the waters; its leaves are heart shaped, targeted, slightly waved, from four to twelve inches long, of a greenish purple hue, and float in broad rich masses on the surface of the water, so as to defend the flower in the centre, whether in deep or shallow water; the leaves always lie flat on the surface, the hollow petiole, to which they are attached, increasing in length as the

* Book xiii., chap. 7.

waters deepen. The flowers are produced upon a stem rising about two feet above the water; they are as large as the palm of the hand, of a tulip-like form, with fifteen pointed petals. When full blown, the flower is often of a beautiful rose colour, sometimes white or yellow, and always delicately fragrant; it has forty or more stamens, and one inversely bell-shaped pistil,* with sixteen or seventeen cells, containing seeds half an inch long, with a rind black and smooth, and, when ripe, of a taste finer than almonds. The description of Pliny is correct, with one exception, and that is, he tells us, in his simple manner, that the seeds resemble millet, whereas they are of the size of a bean. "This bread, made from the seeds of this lotos," says Pliny, "is worked with water or milk. There is not any bread in the world (says report) more wholesome and lighter than this, so long as it is hot; but once cold, it is hard of digestion, and becomes weighty."

The curious germination of the seeds of the lotos rendered it the emblem of that successive production of created beings, taught in the holy Sastras. † In the sublime theory of the Brahminical code, the universe exists only in idea, or rather nature is but a system of ideas originating in Brahme, the supreme being, but actually or immediately produced by Brahma, the efficient creator, from whom, while he exerts his powers of combining ideas, things proceed into being; but when he ceases to exert his powers, things created die away, and return back to their primary elements. These periods of existence and non-existence the disciples of the Vedas distinguish in their biblical manner, by the allegory of day and night, or the waking and sleeping of Brahma. "When that power awakes—for though slumber be not predicable of the sole eternal mind, infinitely wise, and infinitely benevolent, yet it is predicated of Brahma figuratively, as a general property of life—then has the world its full expansion; but when he slumbers with tranquil spirit, then the whole system fades away." ‡

It was this plant which the Egyptians bound around their altars, and which the virgin priestesses wore in wreaths upon their hair. They were gathered with great solemnity by the Egyptian priests, and

* Polyandria Monagynia of Linnæus.

† Ante, "Floral Symbols," page 99. ‡ Menu, ch. i, v. 52.

the deities were painted sitting in their leaves. The creation of Brahma on the leaf of the lotos, was, however, the legend which formed the groundwork of all others of the same class; Osiris, Puzza, and Priapus being but modifications of the same personage, less sublime in character, because removed a greater or less degree from the sources of the original thought. In Hindoo worship, its fecundating properties associate it with the worship of the Linga in the shrine of Siva, one of those mysteries of the temple, which to an European mind, appears but an orgie of disgusting indecency, but which, to the devout son of Mizriam, whose chastity of character is too often a rebuke to his Christian master, is purely emblematic of the creative power of the universe.

Priapus, who with the Greek and Roman poets, was the son of Bacchus and Venus, the god of debauchery, a sort of guardian devil, invented to countenance the luxury of Athens and the sensuality of Rome, was a god of highest repute in the Chaldaic and Egyptian mythologies, profoundly venerated under the names of Orus and Apis, the god of light, the son of the world. The Priapus of the Greeks is a compound of Peor-Apis, according to the Grecian mode of adopting Egyptian names; he is sometimes called Poer singly, sometimes Baal Peor, the same with whose rites the Israelites are so often upbraided. Phurmitus supposes Priapus to have been the same as Pan, the shepherd god; who was equally degraded on one hand and as highly revered on the other. The Romans, reducing the ideas of a refined mythology to their own sensual imbecility, degraded the one to a filthy monster, and made of the other a scarecrow.* Under the name of Az-el,† he was the supposed son of Isis, who was herself but an emblem of the ark—the mother of mankind—and from the Titans he received all that Osiris suffered under the Typhon.

Both Orus and Osiris were styled Heliadæ, and often represented the sun, which has led many writers to refer what has been said of the personages to the luminary itself. Orus was in fact the same as Osiris, but Osiris in his second state; and therefore he is represented by the Egyptians as a child swathed in bondage, a type of the infancy of the world. At other times he shadows forth the likeness of Saturn, the father of agriculture, holding in his hands the implements of

* Bryant, i, 141.

† Ibid, vol. i, p. 206.

tillage, with a ploughshare over his shoulder, and the blossoms of the lotos on his head.

It is easy to trace, even in these confused and distorted remnants of ancient creeds, an identity of idea and a coincidence of purpose. Brahma waking from sleep upon the bosom of the lotos, and Willing the creation by a passing thought; Puzza resting his gigantic frame upon the Lien-uha, or sacred lotos leaf; Orus brought back to immortal life when he lay dead in the midst of the waters, are all emblems of the Supreme Will, which called up the worlds from night, and by a thought, changed the silence of chaos into the morning song of creation.

All tradition and allegory go the same way; and in the most perverted and sensualised of ancient symbols we may still read the sublime thought; the overwhelming truth, handed down by oral tradition and sculptured emblems from one generation to another; pointing back through the dark to the great fountain of all things, and telling in words and images not yet illegible, the simple story of the birth of nature. Beautiful indeed are these revelations of the flowers; sweet old time that, when green leaves and yellow blossoms were parts of the life of man, and the fragrance of the wood-cups mingled with the globules of his blood, filling his heart and hands with a holy purpose, one with nature, with God, and with himself.

Amid the luxuriance of the land of the sun, man was born into a world of flowers. Nourished with the milk of a mother whose life and love had flown together through those channels of religious beauty; he goes forth in his youth to the fields and the forests, and kneels before the protecting lord of spirits, the adorable Ganesa, the son of Siva, whose images are placed beside the highways, in the jungles, and amid the pastures surrounded with green beauty, and with flowers. The god himself is represented by an upright stake of the plant Cacay,* which of all green herbs is most sacred to Ganesa. Round this rustic image of the god, the ground is levelled and consecrated, and then the sincere worshipper kneels and makes his offering of milk and honey.† When his blood, warmed into the generosity of manhood and love, beats and burns in his bosom; it is Cama,‡ the

* Cassia Fistula.

† Buchanan's Journey into Mysore, i, 52.

‡ Cama is the Cupid in the Mythology of the Paranas.

son of Maya, who with a bow of flowers strung with stinging bees, has shot an arrow, tipped with an amra blossom at his heart.

“Quick from his bee-strung bow an arrow flew,
Its point an amra fresh with morning dew.”*

Neither a blind god nor a fat baby is this Cupid of the oriental fiction. His mother, Maya, is imaginative power, since, according to some Hindoo philosophers, whatever exists, exists only in a system of perception, wholly dependent on the imagination, and hence all things are but illusions of the mind. “Except the first cause (Brahme), whatever may appear, or may not appear in the mind, know that it is the mind’s Maya, or delusion, as light and darkness.”† The warm impulse of the brain being the parent of love, Cama himself, though sailing on the wings of the gay lory (or parrot), attended by his dancing nymphs, is a spiritual essence only, for Siva, writhing under the smart of his arrow, flung at him a flame of fire, and consumed his body, so sublimating that which is only beautiful when of the spirit.

Neither do flowers fail this son of Mizraim, when he subdues the raging flame into a genial and cheering warmth, and makes it burn as an oblation upon the altar of a home. His hand is bound to that of his bride by a wisp of the sacred cusa grass, by a priest whose vestments are wrought of the sara or jungle plant,‡ arranged in triple cords according to the precepts of the holy Sastras.§ If in his lifetime he perform good works, and endear himself to his fellow men, flowers are strewn in his path and honours heaped upon him—not as in the West, when death has sealed up the fountains of gratitude—but while *living*, that the heart, while it beats, may know it beats not in vain.¶ And when after a life sanctified in act and thought by the poetic breath and symbolic beauty of flowers, death at last imprints an icy kiss upon him, he goes up to the sweet gardens of Nandana to revel amongst the spiritual flowers or joys which blossom there.

* *Metamorphosis of Sona*, p. 6.

† *Bhagavata Purana*.

‡ *Saccharum spartaneum* of Linnæus.

§ *Menu*. ii, ch. 2, v. 42, 43.

¶ According to the *Paranas*, flower-strewing is an honour due to the benefactors of the people.

But these things are of the past, and though fit for the age of mystery and Paganism, are painfully unfit for the age of Christianity and progress. Beautiful as things of the past, noble memorials of an age of mystery, and a race of giants, they would have died out long ago, had the Christian masters of the world been Christians in their life and character. Debauchery, pillage, slavery, exaction, and bloodshed have marked their steps, and the children of the sun have seen little yet of that spirit of love which forms the first feature of the Christian's preaching.*

* *Vide* "History of the Indian Archipelago," by Horace St. John.



SUMMER PICTURES.

"THE mountains high, and how they stand!
 The valleys, and the great mainland!
 The trees, the herbs, the towers strong,
 The castles, and the rivers long.

* * * * *

On hills then show the ewe and lamb,
 And every young one with his dam;
 Then lovers walk, and tell their tale,
 Both of their bliss and of their bale;
 Then everything doth pleasure find,
 In that that comforts all their kind."

EARL SURREY.

EACH season has its own pictures, and each picture its own peculiar feature. In nature nothing is repeated, though the whole economy of nature is endless repetition. Though you have travelled all over the round world, and witnessed scenes innumerable, and the productions of nature under every variety of aspect, you shall never see the *same* picture twice. The summer-scenes of England are peculiarly beautiful, and there is no spot in the world which can equal the domestic rusticity and rich verdant beauty of English summer scenery, although I am an Englishman and say so. Italy, the garden of the world, is parched up as brown as an old hat, at the season of Midsummer. The plains of Judea, and the valleys of Jordan, though extolled by travellers, are, nevertheless, during the most charming portion of the year, nothing more than wide carpets of a dull melancholy green, for the shapeless olive-bushes, which grow so numerous in those districts, wear, when in their most luxuriant condition, nothing but a mass of dull dingy leaves, destitute altogether of either grace or verdant beauty. We shall therefore turn with some gratulation to glance on a few pictures from our own fields, drawn, it is true, with a very weak pen, but still copied from nature, and if not truly in the letter, at least in the spirit by which they were prompted,—genuine transcripts of the real thousand brambles, and rose-blooms, and fruitful fields, for which our beloved country is so justly celebrated.

Well, there are so many, I scarcely know with which to begin. Do you see yonder gipsy-tent, sending up a blue wreath of smoke among the elm-trees,—a soft curling stream of the purest azure, flinging a most beautiful shadow upon the leafy branches, but smelling, when you get amongst it, as vile as a tinker's pipe, or the breath of an old exciseman? There is an old knotted oak to the right, which looks as venerable as St. Pierre; just below it is a wooden bridge, which cracked its ribs long ago, and now threatens to go in the back, and let some poor fellow souse into the water, with all his butter and eggs, some fine morning before breakfast. The water-weeds and snapdragons are precious fond of these maimed and broken-winded timbers, and grow in rich festoons of green and yellow, as if they were adorning the portico of Flora's temple. The elongated mass of green algæ which clings to the last plank by the willow-tree, and hangs down into the slow current as if it had nothing to do but to be idle, and was almost too lazy to do that, will wake up some morning and find that it had been clinging to a forlorn hope, and must get out of the rubbish and masses of rotten timber the best way it can, or perish amid the ruins of its lost home.

Well! swing round a bit over the common, and get upon the hillock of gravel, and now look all around upon the rich masses of waving fern, and the glittering light which plays amid the cool green of the oak leaves; see the winding river, like a clear silver line, cutting its way through green oases of willows and tall reeds; look further on over the heath-covered hill, sheltering the sweet village in the valley at its feet; look at the strange play of the sunshine, as the huge clouds go sailing along like mighty spirits in the vast abyss. Here is the broad highway, dotted here and there with moving figures and stately clumps of pines, and the sun shines upon the white sandy road, as if it would blind the very hedges which stand along the pathway to hide the fields from wayfarers. Down yonder lies a broad reedy marsh, and the clouds hang above it to see their faces reflected in the waters which look so blue and cool, and which go lurking here and there beneath rank sedges and osiers and tall rushes, as if to delude some unheeding wight to venture where it looks so fresh and green, so as suddenly to find himself up to his neck in a cold bath, and so entangled in mud and weeds, that it were better had he never learned to swim, for courage and dexterity are the worst possible qualities in such conditions.

It is glorious now, as Thomas Miller hath it, to wander "through green lanes which lead nowhere," into dreary old woods, where little hillocks of red leaves spin round and round in a giddy dance with the "wild west wind," and where crisped leaves overhang the pathway, and where you get into the thick underwood, and are so shut in from the sky and the country round, that you despair of ever finding the path again, and wonder what were the sensations of the dear "babies" who died in the wood; and perhaps you hear the full and delicious notes of some little robin, and you begin to estimate the probabilities of that being the bird which will cover your dead body with leaves, if that uninhabited jungle should prove to you a sepulchre.

Up from the broad cornfields green hills arise, whose boundary fills the sky, and the white patches here and there upon the upland horizon show the villages which lie there; and as these landmarks fade from the sight, and become again visible, you can tell when a thick cloud is passing over, even at that distance, and if you watch you will see the sombre shadow gliding noiselessly along towards you. It passes over the meadows, changes the line of the river, and at last glides over your own head, and you feel a few drops of rain while the gloom lasts, and, gazing on it as it recedes towards the opposite horizon, you see the shower growing steadily, and stalking on under the sunshine like a god defiant. Then, as it gathers strength, the sun's rays fall upon the ebbing tide, and the majestic arch of many colours spans the scene from one horizon to the other.

Lovely, indeed, are the little sheets of water, which seem only made for the frogs and toads, and yellow flags and bulrushes to play in, and which nature must have dug for the wood-birds to go to and drink when the July sun had sucked up all the forest runnels. Amid the reedy brakes, you sometimes start the black water-hen, and she shrieks with alarm for her downy family of helpless little ones, and at the same moment down goes the water-rat with a deep splash, to rise again at some goodly distance, and immediately commence swimming round and round some broken branch which dips into the pond, and nibble a leaf here and there, as if trying to persuade himself that nothing has happened, and that there is no need to fear intruding bipeds.

Sometimes you come suddenly upon a quiet village embowered in ancient trees, on the border of a thick wood, and there are two or three huge sign-posts, and sundry stacks of hay, with homesteads and

barns pitched about in the oddest of ways, but all roofed over with thick velvet mosses or tufts of whitlow-grass and stonecrop. The cottage roofs and chimneys are covered with rich liverworts and orange-coloured lichens, which harmonize most beautifully with the hues of the cracked and twisted trees. There are timid wreaths of smoke curling up among the tall branches of the elms, and you catch the homely smell of ash-wood fires; you gaze upon the scene, and read, in the white-washed wall and the low cottage with its acre of potatoes and well-stocked kitchen-garden, the unwritten history of English worth, and the peaceful content of an English home, nestled amid the land of ancient trees. You think of old customs, of May-day, of sheep-shearing, and of harvest-home; you remember that such scenes were to be found long ago in the days of good King David, upon the sunny slopes of Palestine; and although you have not the pencil of a Morland, a Wilson, or a Collins, such a picture is painted for ever on the living canvass of your heart. As you turn off into the narrow by-path, to see whereabout the village church is hiding itself, you come upon a picture which every artist has tried his hand at. A quiet pond, overgrown with duckweeds and bulrushes, with a group of cattle of white, russet, and grey, loitering about in the most picturesque positions, the cows looking particularly motherly and stupid, and all of them flickering their tails about to drive away the swarms of insects which annoy them. There are two or three old pollard-willows, and an oak tree with neither head nor limbs, stands staggering at the brink in a half horizontal position, as if he contemplated suicide by drowning his body; he is covered all over with scars, and wounds, and blotches, which tell most significantly of the many affrays he has had with the midnight-winds, and the north-east blasts of January. If you come here next summer you shall find him leaning over the water in the same melancholy pondering mood, shaking a few green leaves in the wind, just to divert the attention of passers-by from the deed he is evidently contemplating, and it will be many summers before he will quite make up his mind to resign himself with composure to a muddy sepulchre.

The fields around wear the promise of plenty; the rye wears a yellow and a hearty look, the horned barley makes a rustling sound, as the soft wind sweeps gently through its long plummy ears. The pendulous oats quiver and tremble in the dancing sunlight, and the wheat gets whiter and fatter day by day. The mole-hills on the com-

mon are purple with the clumps of wild thyme, and a drowsy, overpowering fragrance comes from the blossoming beanfield, "reminding us of Proserpine and her fallen flowers." The hedges are covered with the foam-like cymes of the wayside elder, and woven in a network of the wild convolvulus and the white bryony, which throw their glossy trails in all directions.

But we leave the land of flowers, and, led on by the witchery of the clear sunshine and the deep blue sky, studded with masses of cloud as bright as molten silver, tumble over the brink of a little hollow, scooped like that of Cowper, by Kilwick's echoing wood. There is a small mud-walled cottage, partially white-washed, standing upon a little plot of chalky ground, partly fenced and planted with cabbages and potatoes; and just at the foot of a tall perpendicular cliff, on a small round grassy hill, lies an ill-favoured mongrel fast asleep. The upper edge of the cliff is fringed with coppice wood, and a straggling hazel hangs carelessly over the brink, the shadows of which, as it sways to and fro in the wind, dance like grim spectres on the white chalky ramparts, and hold a sort of demon dance with the light steamy smoke which curls gracefully upward from the little hovel below. Beyond the young coppice rises a rich plantation of Scotch firs, and their tall grey stems swing mournfully and change places with each other, alternately forming long and regular vistas, at the end of which you catch enchanting glimpses of the blue sky, and then lose them again behind a forest of silvery stems, whose dark-green leafy summits shed on the brown slopes and grassy avenues below a calm and softened twilight. It would be impossible to gaze on such a scene as this without thinking of Longfellow's lovely stanzas:—

" Before me rose an avenue
Of tall and sombrous pines,
Abroad their fan-like branches grew,
And where the sunshine darted through,
Spread a vapour soft and blue,
In long and sloping lines.

" And falling on my weary brain,
Like a fast-falling shower,
The dreams of youth come back again,—
Low lisps of the summer rain
Dropping on the ripened grain,
As once upon the flower."

When you get up there, underneath the rich festoons of foliage,

and feel your eyes aching with the strange intersections of the stems crossing each other, and thinned here and there by time or accident, and observe the cones and broken twigs which sprinkle the green sward, you think of Wordsworth's "sheddings of the pining umbrage," and of those firs which live in their green beauty for ever in his graphic verse, and perhaps you detect yourself involuntarily quoting the lines :—

—————"Above my head,
At every impulse of the moving breeze,
The fir-grove murmurs with a sea-like sound."

Bundles of poetical associations come tumbling upon you,—Thomas Hood and the Midsummer Fairies, mingling with the weird tone of the "Bridge of Sighs"; Spenser and his Catalogue of Trees, wherein he individualises each by a happy choice of epithets :—

"And forth they pass, with pleasure forward led,
Joying to hear the birds' sweet harmony,
Which, therein shrouded from the tempest's dread,
Seemed in their song to scorn the cruel sky;
Much can they praise the trees so straight and high,—
The sailing pine, the cedar proud and tall."

And as you get into a day-dream, and gaze upon the blue snatches of sky through artless breaks in the foliage, and upon the "half-excluded light which sleeps in patches upon the shadowy verdure below," your thoughts turn to Robin Hood and John Keats; to Scott and his "forest fair;" to Coleridge and the "leafy month of June;" to Robert Bloomfield and quaint old Herrick. And from the solemn quietude and beauty of these pictures, the fancy draws innumerable beautiful figures, such as the poets have ever delighted to revel in, and they come up successively upon "that inward eye which is the bliss of solitude," like stars peeping through the cool twilight, or young hopes, hallowed in their birth by those boyish tears, not unfrequently shed over fancied disappointments. And then bitter memorials of old sins, and feelings of remorse for broken ties and rash follies, overwhelm the soul like a November fog, and we feel that if we had the power, we could gladly blot out all the history of our past. But there are those who love us now, and the world is not all desolate, and if the heart is in unison with the external world of beauty, we shall find that the influences of nature have a balm for the recesses of the deepest sorrow, and that a spirit of gloom and discontent is an

iniquity against the universal spirit of love, which fills the earth with gladness.

Push on, for the voices multiply both near and far, and the sunset is not far off. We must cross the sheep-lea and the broad lawn meadows before we can rest our limbs, and get our daily dinner of brown bread and water-cresses. What is that sharp rasping sound? Why, the mower wetting his scythe in yonder meadows, where the work of hay-making has commenced. What a rich waving sea of emerald and golden billows is the unmown hay-field! How calm it lies in the beauty of the sunlight, with its spikes of chaffy blossoms and sprinkling of buttercups and cowslips! And beyond, the homely farmstead rises half-hidden amid tall elms, and leaning upon the sky like the shadowy painting of a dream. There are groups of sturdy men with iron sinews and sunburnt faces, all occupied in the busy work of the field. The mower sweeps down grass and flowers altogether, laying prostrate the pride of the summer, and turning swath upon swath with his sinewy arm, mingling the star-like daisy, the honey-scented clover, the butter-cups, yellow trefoils, and long grass altogether; and before the sun has sunk into the west, their beauty will have perished for ever. He heeds not their beauty, but goes on and on, like a death-destroying fiend, hewing down all before him, while his eyes gleam with the grim satisfaction of destruction; and leaving them piled ridge upon ridge, until the field is at last filled with round hillocks, beneath which the flowers lie, withered and dead, as in sepulchres, whence they throw rich perfumes upon the air, to tell how sweet was the sunny current of their lives, and as assurances that their spirits still hover above the spots which their beauty had sanctified.

Now, down the steep hill-side into the old wood, and feel the mystery which always hangs about these ancient trees, and the thick underwood which gathers at their feet.

“How sweet the shade of this magnificent wood!—
The knarled oaks, upon whose hoary
Tempest-stricken brows, Old Time
Has chronicled a thousand years.”

Who can tell what flowers grow in these dark untrodden solitudes, what birds have made their homes amid these leafy coverts; what strange beasts and reptiles crawl and prowl among the moist leaves, which lie rotting in fragrant masses where the underwood forms an

impassable jungle ; or burrow under the hollow trees, or bask beside the hidden water-courses, or on the great mossy branches of the trees which have been hurled down by winter storms, and have been since overgrown by rank weeds and flowers, which strive from year to year to hide their hoary ruin and decrepitude ? The twilight gloom seems to enter one's very heart, as we gaze upon the dim shadowy grandeur of these green and mysterious woods, which have grown old and patriarchal in the light and darkness, the sunshine and the glooms, of long, long centuries. But there is no time to think of the Druids and the ancient Britons, and we must find our way through deep dells where the foliage darkens, and where gnarled and withered stems stretch upward beseechingly, like troubled souls in purgatory, and get once more into the broadlands and the field paths. The moment we leave the skirts of the wood, we encounter a picture of surpassing loveliness ; there is a broad footpath leading over a wide common, and a sweet little river wends its way silently along under the shadows of stately trees, circling like a silver line around the foot of the furze-covered hill, till it vanishes like an evening cloud in the distance. There are lambs and sheep scattered among the bushes, and the musical jingling of their bells comes floating on the soft air like the music of a dream. There are glorious hillocks of purple heather and wild thyme, haunted all day long by humming bees ; and down in yonder green valley lie the cattle chewing the cud, and almost buried among the grass and flowers ; while out afar lies the little village, with its cracked and tattered windmill and its white cottages and clumps of tall trees, looming upon the blue horizon like an island floating in the sky.

Who would not leave the crowded city, with its eternal dust and din, and black walls and sooty atmosphere, for such lovely scenes as these ? Who would not leave the stiff forests of chimney-pots for the green waving forests of beech and oak, and to lie idly by the banks of singing streams ; to see the hawk poised motionless in the air, the timid hare bound through the green fern, and to hear the ring dove cooing ? A walled city is a prison for the human heart, and to shut ourselves up from beholding the beauty with which the hand of God has clothed the earth, an iniquity and a moral death.

USES OF WILD PLANTS.

“For every green herb, from the lotus to the darnel,
Is rich with numerous aids to help incurious man.”

TUPPER.

DR. JOHNSON’S definition of the word weed deserves to be classed among the aberrations of genius. “Weed, an herb, noxious and useless.” Poor man! every lover of nature (and every good man is a lover of nature) will heave a sigh for that line of the Dictionary. Why? Did the good Doctor believe that God had created anything to be useless? Oh no, that cannot be; charity rather prompts us to believe that the learned lexicographer either put aside all his philosophy when he came to that word, or that he gave it to one of his assistants to settle. It is quite impossible that the Doctor could have furnished that definition himself, for we know that he did possess a soul and a heart. But surely that clerk who dished up the word was a man without a soul, and therefore beyond all redemption. Let us suggest a definition. Weed, a plant neglected, because its qualities are not sufficiently known. Some of these said weeds, little as we know of their properties, are extremely valuable in medicine, and in various domestic uses.

“From the first bud, whose verdant head
The winter’s lingering tempest braves,
To those, which ’mid the foliage dead
Shrink latest to their annual graves:
All are for use, for health, for pleasure given,
All speak, in various ways, the bounteous hand of Heaven.”

CHARLOTTE SMITH.

It would be difficult to define what we mean by UTILITY. Among the many excellent ideas entertained by the North American Indians, is one, that only that which is truly useful is beautiful. But all our theories of beauty and utility are barren; they are all based upon the superficial knowledge which man possesses of the mysterious workings of nature. I fervently believe, that there is nothing in the endless range of the material world but is at the same time beautiful and useful; although its beauties and uses may yet have to be discovered.

We will enumerate a few of the uses of our common field plants, commencing with the most humble mosses and lichens, those curious plants which adhere to the bark of trees and the surfaces of rocks and stones.

The majority of these plants are in perfection during the depth of winter. Early in the year, during frosty weather, the collector will have no trouble in finding the crab's-eye lichen, *Lecanora perella*. It is very frequent on exposed rocks and stones, and forms conspicuous circular patches of a dirty white colour, which adhere closely to the rocky surfaces on which it grows. This lichen is much used as a crimson or purple dye in France. The cudbear of commerce is a lichen (*Tartareus*); it is very similar in form to the crab's-eye lichen, but differs from it in colour, being brownish in hue. Large quantities of this lichen are obtained in some parts of Scotland. The peasants frequently earn fourteen shillings a week by collecting it; it is scraped from the surface of the rocks with an iron hoop. Large quantities are sold in the Glasgow market, where it is used for dyeing wool purple. The colouring matter, called *Archil*, is obtained from different lichens; the most esteemed is that termed *lichen roccella*, and which is found very abundantly in the Canary Islands, and at Cape Verde. The *Variolaria dealbata* also furnishes a product of a similar nature, but inferior in character; it is found upon the rocks around Auvergne, and in the Pyrenees. *Archil* is frequently mentioned by Pliny. When Rome was in the height of her pride and strength it was much used; but after the extinction of the Roman Empire, the employment of it as a dye fell into disuse, but it was again brought into notice at the commencement of the fourteenth century, by a Florentine of German origin, named Frederigo. For a century subsequently, Italy alone supplied the world with this substance, and thence it was procured chiefly on the coasts and islands of the Mediterranean. In 1402 the Canary Islands were discovered, and this lichen was then obtained from thence, and afterwards from Cape Verde. On the coasts of Sweden, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales, the lichen roccella has been used from time immemorial for dyeing fabrics red. The lichens are closely allied to the mosses and the fungi. The fir club-moss, *Licopodium selago*, is much used in the Isle of Skye to fix the colour in dyeing instead of alum, on account of its stringent properties. Another species, the common club-moss, *L. clavatus*, which is very abundant in some parts of England, and

which covers extensive tracts of land in Lapland, is largely used in the manufacture of fire-works.

The gaudy buttercup, though a sad plague to the farmer, for the cattle cannot feed upon it, is yet extremely useful in medicine. Most of the buttercup plants have a poisonous watery juice, which possesses emetic properties. The root of *Ranunculus bulbosa*, the bulbous crowfoot, was formerly called St. Anthony's turnip, but it is quite useless for the purposes of nutriment, even when cooked. A beautiful plant of this tribe is the lesser celandine, *R. ficaria*, abundant in quiet hedgerows and moist meadows during March and April. Its heart-shaped leaves are marked with whitish-green spots. It is an excellent prognosticator of the weather; its blossoms shut up just before rain. It is a sluggard in its habits, seldom lifting up its head to look upon the sun before nine in the morning, and always retiring before five in the evening. The root of this plant is much used in Cochin China as a medicine, where it is held in great esteem, and believed to possess innumerable virtues. In many parts of Norway and Sweden it is used as a table vegetable, its leaves being boiled and eaten as greens. It is also used in some English counties to prepare a wash for removing specks from the eyes. All the species of crowfoot are useful in medicine; their chief characteristic is that of raising a blister on the skin, and they are frequently used in cases of acute inflammation in the place of cantharides, and the effect is attended with a less amount of suffering. One very beautiful and interesting species of ranunculus may be found in abundance during May and June, in most lakes and clean ponds, and sometimes in rivers. It is called *Ranunculus aquatilis*, and produces a beautiful white blossom on the surface of the water. The most beautiful we have ever seen were growing luxuriantly in the little stream that falls into the Ravensbourne, at Rushy Green. This is the only one of the family which is destitute of poisonous properties, and this peculiarity is the less to be expected in an aquatic plant. It is largely used as fodder in various parts of Gloucester and Somerset. The borders of the lovely Avon—a stream dear to all who have seen its peaceful waters and fertile banks, and dearer still for its poetic memories—are covered with it in profusion, and it gives an aspect of great loveliness to the calm and quiet river. It is largely used by the cottagers as fodder; cows, sheep, and horses are fed upon it to a great extent. The cows are so partial to it, that they are very reluctantly dissuaded

from taking more than they require. Mr. Loudon states, that one farmer who had several cows and a horse, required only one ton of hay in the course of a year, feeding his cattle almost entirely upon the ranunculus.

A very common flower, and one which may be found in plenty at the early season of the year, the dandelion, *Leontodon Taraxacum*, is a plant of very great utility. Its beauty is very great, and if more rare it would be highly prized. Elliott has called it the sunflower of the spring; and it throws a golden light over moorland and lea when the gradually lengthening days betoken that the time for the blooming of flowers and the singing of birds is at hand. It is one of the earliest flowers for the bee, and produces a considerable quantity of honey. Its root is prized as a medicine throughout France and Germany. Large quantities are burnt and sold as a substitute for coffee. It is much used in this country in dyspepsia, possessing tonic and diuretic qualities of great value. The common groundsel is closely allied to the dandelion; it supplies the birds with food at all seasons, and they eat largely of its seeds and foliage. It may be found in almost every part of the world, and always springs up in the lands of new colonies, as if destined to be an attendant on man in all his wanderings. There are nine British species, and as many as five hundred and ninety-six in various parts of the world. We are inclined to think that this plant is capable of very extended application, from its bland emollient properties. It imparts soft and healing qualities to water, and, during rough windy weather, water in which groundsel has been steeped is useful for washing the skin that has been chapped and inflamed by the wind.

That well-known plant, the coltsfoot, *Tussilago Farfara*, is in blossom early in spring long before its leaves appear, and its presence always indicates a clay soil. The down which is found beneath the leaves was formerly used by villagers for tinder, and might, doubtless, be used in many textile manufactures. The feathery appendage to the seeds is used by the Highlanders for stuffing beds and mattresses. It is known universally as a remedy for affections of the lungs, and it is in this respect worthy of great esteem. The ancient Greeks were in the habit of sucking the smoke of the dried flowers through a reed as a cure for asthma; and it is much used at the present time in villages in the same manner. Another spring plant is the ground-ivy, *Glechoma Hederacea*; its leaves exhale a delightful fragrance; it

is gathered in large quantities by the village herbalists, and used to allay the sufferings induced by the obstinate coughs so prevalent in early spring. In the time of Queen Elizabeth the "herbe women" were wont to cry it regularly with the other "simples," both in a fresh and dry state about the streets of London. It was then known by the now obsolete names of ale-hoof, tun-hoof, cat's-hoof, hay-maids, and gill-by-the-ground. Ray speaks of it in terms of the highest praise, and mentions some great cures effected by it.

Another plant, possessing excellent tonic properties, the gentian, *Gentiana amarella*, is to be found in meadows or limestone soils; its bell-shaped flowers grow in beautiful clusters; and is found in the crevices of the rocks, and on the slippery surfaces of the glaciers in the Alpine regions, blooming and shedding its sweet smiles of beauty upon those silent and solitary regions of perpetual snow. It is a rare plant, as are all our wild species of gentian. Nor must we pass the violet, that favourite of the poet; a flower endeared to us by the sweetest associations—by memories of home and early love, and woodland rambles, and the budding of fond anticipations. Blooming so modestly in green nooks and shady coverts, but betraying itself by its own sweet fragrance. It is a native of both hemispheres; it blooms in the bleak fields of Norway, and beneath the palms of Africa; in Syria and China it produces its humble blossom, and sheds its hallowed perfume amid the gorgeous roses and camellias of those sunny climes. It was formerly sold in the markets of Athens, and was highly esteemed by the Athenians, and as a silent rebuke to man, that, while his works crumble into dust, nature still continues constant, the violets flower in rich profusion amid the desolate ruin of the cities of Greece, and now, in Athens,

"The air is sweet with violets running wild
'Mid broken sculptures and fallen capitals."

Pliny held the violet in great esteem, and he avers that a garland of violets worn round the head would prevent headache or giddiness. But modern science does not recognise this; the practice is rather calculated to produce headache, and there are instances of a great number of violets in an apartment having given rise to convulsions. We may remark *en passant* that the fragrance of flowers is only beneficial when inhaled in the open air, and that a large number of flowers of any kind in a close apartment is injurious to health.

The leaves of the violet are useful as an application to bruises ; and the flower was so highly esteemed as a medicine for weak lungs, that a conserve, called violet sugar, was, at the time of Charles II., sold by apothecaries.

The violet is exceedingly rare in Scotland, although it once flourished among the Highland glens, and on the borders of her beautiful lakes. It was formerly used by the Highland ladies as a cosmetic, and Professor Hooker has quoted some lines, said to be from the Gaelic, which would lead us to infer that it was once held in great esteem. "Anoint thy face with goat's milk in which violets have been infused, and there is not a young prince on earth who will not be charmed with thy beauty." We can bear testimony to the cosmetic influence of the violet if merely gathered and carried home for contemplation, and to those of our beloved countrywomen who would wish to preserve and enhance that beauty which has been so lavishly bestowed upon them, we would say, by all means let the violet be your favourite cosmetic ; but bear in mind, it will have no influence whatever, unless it is gathered by those who need its beautifying influence.

A wine made of the flowers of the sweet violet was much esteemed by the Romans, and was used at their festivals. The violet also contributes to those magnificent oriental entertainments where

" The Persian atar gul's perfume
 ——— scatters all its odours o'er
 The pictured roof and marbled floor."

The syrup which is so invariably an accompaniment at these feasts is prepared from roses and violets, and the sherbet of the Turks is composed of violet syrups mingled with water.

But we must not omit to mention those sweet companions of the heath, and the forest—the furze, the heather, and the graceful ferns. The common heath ling, or "heather" of Scottish poetry is most beautiful ; its rich green foliage and lovely crimson flowers make it a meet companion for the sweet wild thyme and the beautiful hare-bell. The heath lands are usually regarded as desolate and cheerless spots ; but no true lover of nature ever thought so, the wide carpeting of mosses and grasses, and the innumerable lovely flowers which thrive in wild luxuriance upon the heath lands, render those places rich in beauty and rife with the most endearing associations. There are the rich crimson bells of the erica, the golden blossoms of the furze, and

the broom, shedding their own delightful perfume, with the sweet blue-bell and the wild thyme; and the cinquefoil and a thousand others of nature's fairest children, together with the humming bees, and the breezes laden with odours, and the lazy clouds that lie above basking in the sunshine. These have delights such as words cannot express, for those who have hearts to love and souls fitted to catch the inspirations of nature.

Our five native species of heath (*Erica*), are all lovely flowers, and are so characteristic that the veriest tyro would know any of the family at a second sight. The ling (*Calluna Vulgaris*) is included among the plants which compose the heather. This plant, but little regarded in the southern parts of our island, is made subservient to a variety of purposes in the bleak and barren highlands of Scotland, and it is the plant which gives the peculiar tone to the wild and romantic scenery of the Scottish mountains. The poorer inhabitants make walls for their cottages with alternate layers of heath, and a kind of mortar made of the black heathy mould, and straw; the woody roots of the heath being placed in the centre, the tops internally and externally. They make their beds of it, by placing the roots downward, and the tops only uppermost, which are sufficiently soft to sleep on. But these are not pampered in the effeminating lap of luxury; and the hardy and simple life of these mountaineers, and their constant exposure to the free and invigorating breezes of their native hills, render their couch, fragrant and humble as it is, a more certain place of repose than is the curtained down of the wealthy, where soft luxuriance is no palliative of withered hopes and blasted prospects, and the painful fruits of vile ambitions, and burning anguish of heart. The toil-worn mountaineer lies down upon the fragrant sprays to be refreshed and invigorated by peaceful sleep.

“ With that he shook the gather'd heath,
And spread the plaid upon the wreath,
And the brave foemen, side by side,
Lay peaceful down, like brothers tried;
And slept until the dawning beam
Purpled the mountain and the stream.”

LADY OF THE LAKE.

In the island of Islay, many cabins are thatched with the “heather,” and ale is frequently made by brewing one part of malt, and two parts of the young tops of heath. An old historian relates that the

Picts, who drank a great quantity of ale, made it of the young heath shoots. In the north of Scotland, ropes are made of it as strong, and nearly as pliable as hemp. The highlanders also dye their cloth of a yellow or orange colour, with an infusion made from the young shoots; and almost useless as the heather is frequently deemed, for any other purpose than to enliven the moorland, to the hardy sons of Scotland it is invaluable.

The golden blossom of the furze and the broom render the aspect of the moorland extremely brilliant. The furze or gorse (*Ulex Europæus*) is a very valuable plant to the cottager. The furze is an evergreen, and its flowers last from May till summer is ended; and even during sharp frost it often bravely puts forth a few blossoms to cheer the landscape. The furze is used to a great extent for hedges and for fuel; it is often gathered from the heath, and stacked up at the cottage door during winter. It is very plentiful in Devonshire, and large quantities were formerly cultivated there for fuel and for the feeding of cattle. Cows are particularly fond of the young tops; at Birmingham there are several large dairy establishments in which gorse is used as an article of food. There is a small steam engine attached to each, by which the gorse is crushed to a pulp, and in that state is given to the cows, which soon become extremely fond of it. We have seen a thriving flock of goats which were fed entirely on furze, and we have been informed that plough-horses may be kept in good condition upon it. It is highly useful to the birds, who soon clear away its numerous pods, and the bees get a good store of honey from its fragrant flowers. The summer wind comes from the moor laden with the refreshing fragrance of this plant, and many a weary traveller has been soothed and comforted thereby. And notwithstanding the riches of the conservatory, and the wonders of foreign climes, the furze is still one of the most beautiful of flowers; and breathing as it does, on the wide moorland, or on the bonny hedges-rows, the true language of home, and adding by its beauty to the scenery of happy England, it must be ever mingled with the most pleasing and poetical associations.

It would be impossible to pass the ferns unnoticed; for, among the plants of the forest dell, or the lonely waste, the ferns are paramount in utility. Then, to be brief, the ashes of the fern make the best kind of kelp, a material of great value to the soap-maker or the manufacturer of glass; or, the same ashes may be used in a domestic

manner, after the fashion of the Welsh housewives. Let the ferns be burnt while green, and make the ashes into balls with a little water and dry them in the sunshine, and store them up, and you will be furnished with a soap of excellent quality, which may be kept for any length of time. The cultivator of newly-reclaimed lands will need no other manure than the fern ashes which remain after he has supplied his family with soap—and, in rooting them up, his land will be greatly improved; or, if the fern be cut when green, and suffered to rot, a greater effect will be produced. The root-stocks of ferns make an excellent mash for pigs. The bracken, *Pteris aquilina*, which covers thousands of acres of waste land in this country, and which proves the best cover for game, might be well employed in this way by cottagers. Considerable quantities of the young shoots are cut in Dean Forest, and used as a mash for pigs; and a great advantage of this food is, that it comes into use in a season when the cottagers' gardens are not in a condition to supply sufficient for their pigs. The roots of the common brake form an excellent table vegetable, if boiled in the same way as carrots. An excellent farina may also be prepared from fern roots; and, indeed, the Norwegians, and the natives of Kamtschatka, use large quantities of it in making their bread. In Norway, also, they are used as fodder for sheep, cattle, and goats. The plants are cut and steeped in warm water, and the animals devour it with avidity, and get fat upon it. In Wales it is much used as litter, and to thatch cottages. One very beautiful species, *Osmundia regalis*, yields a very excellent starch; the roots requiring to be pounded, and steeped in boiling water. Many kinds are used by the tanner in the preparation of kid and chamois leather. The medical value of the ferns has, like that of most other wild plants, been lately much depreciated. The maiden's hair *Adiantum*, a very elegant plant, is much used for coughs; and the *Asplenium* have been highly esteemed in complaints of the viscera. Newman asserts that *P. vulgæ* is used to a great extent by the elderly women of Herefordshire, as a remedy for whooping-cough; it is gathered in November, and hung up to dry, and, when used, boiled with coarse sugar. The maiden's hair is distilled with orange-flower, water and honey by the French, and the product is the well-known confection called capillaire, a very refreshing summer drink.

Such are some few of the uses to which our wild plants may be put; we could enumerate a thousand others, but space will not permit.

Not alone are they beautiful, and redolent of sweet influences, but they minister like faithful and loving servants to our wants, and open up a new source of wealth to those who will but seek that knowledge, without which nature is dumb and unmeaning, but, with which everything around us teems with life and beauty. It is a pleasure to know that in the pathless woods, in the shady dell of the forest, in the hedgerows, in the pools and streams, on the bleak common, and beside the cottage wall ; there are innumerable sources of wealth and comfort which remain unseen, unknown, and almost uncared for by the great mass of humanity.

“ Not useless are ye, flowers ! though made for pleasure,
Blooming o’er field or wave, by day and night ;
From every source your sanction bids me treasure
Harmless delight.”



A GLANCE AT THE PROGRESS OF DISCOVERY AND SCIENCE DURING THE PAST HALF CENTURY.

A N A D D R E S S.

LIKE some form of mortal mould, when its term of years has been completed, half a century has gone down into the grave, leaving behind it only the shadows and remembrances of its deeds. As we judge of men, so we judge of years. We reverence their memory for the good which it embalms, and we sigh for those thoughts and deeds which can only serve to drown the memory with shame, but which, perchance, can never be forgotten. The half century which has just sunk into the hush of time has been one of strife and struggle, and a period fraught with incidents involving the dearest interests of humanity. With its revolutions, its destruction of dynasties, its creation of new states, and its efforts to carve out—Pygmalion-like—some nobler form of humanity, we have nothing here to do. We have to glance at the progress of its spirit of research, and trace out a few of the workings of its inventive genius.

If any one era of the world has been distinguished for its march of mind, and its practical applications of theoretic truths, the period just closed has been so pre-eminently. Its Idea is the supremacy of mental power—the conquest of the world by thought. If we look back and trace through the half circle of years the distinguishing features which they embody, our whole attention will be absorbed with the spectacle which it presents of man fighting with the elements; divesting them of their long-cherished freedom, and making them the servants of his will. The human mind has passed through its inductive phases—its early speculations on the wild, the grand, and the terrible; its lofty flights of sublime thought, and struggles after the Infinite; its scholastic eras of philosophy and fiction, reason and presumption. It has voyaged safely through that troubled sea of mediæval darkness, battling with the confused elements of disrupted systems, and aided

by the brilliant labours of its noble pilots on the deep, the men who, whether wearing the names of Bacon, Boyle, or Newton, have achieved for it a broad empire of glory—it has passed safely through a chaos of confusion into a region of promise, of beauty, and of truth.

Strange, indeed, were those crude ideas of Kepler, or the more curious cobwebs of Huygens, which endeavoured to limit the number of our companion orbs to geometrical and arithmetical fictions which those philosophers had propounded. Strange in themselves, but infinitely more clumsy, when compared with the progress of astronomy during the past fifty years. The brilliant discovery, in 1781, of the planet Uranus, by the great Sir William Herschel seems to have opened up a new field of research for the genius which was then hidden in the womb of the future. That discovery, one of the most important in the history of observation, seemed to confirm, in its full integrity and spirit, the expression given to the law of gravitation by Newton, and established a principle of primary importance in the science of astronomy itself. It is strange that that very planet should, in so few years, become the index to one still farther embosomed in the deeps, and point out, by the very necessity of its conformability to law, the existence of an orb more wonderful and majestic than itself, and aid in the extension of our solar system to twice its former supposed limits. Yet it was only the endeavour to square the motions of Uranus with the elements, calculated by Herschel, that induced two young men, in two different countries, simultaneously to enter into such a minute examination of all the recorded observations of the planet, as should lead in each case to the discovery of another.

A grand triumph, that—of the infallibility of law and the validity of theory as an instrument. Here is a young man perplexed by the erratic movements of a planet, setting out to explore its perturbations, in the endeavour to read in these perturbations themselves the cause which may have produced them. He goes on step by step, guided by an unerring system of analysis, and ultimately discovers lurking there in that mass of intricate phenomena a great and beautiful orb—a new world, another link in the chain by which all are bound together. Leverrier was not content with knowing it was there, but he took the plummet into his hand and weighed the new world against it; he determined the weight, diameter, relative bulk, direction of motion, and distance from the sun of the discovered stranger; nay, even more; he pointed to the very spot in the heavens where it should be found;

and all this within a few trifles of the truth, and before he had seen it with any other than his mental eyes.

Since the time of Newton, the astronomer has rather speculated on the ever-shifting perturbations, than on the nominal ellipses of the planets. Their existence, too, is interdependent: destroy one, and all the others would suffer in proportion. Each planet may be said to be determined by, or to be the result of, the concurrence of the habitudes of all the others. Moreover, there are, we are told, opaque orbs, large as those which are visible, that revolve with Sirius and Procyon around some common centre. The objects revealed by light constitute but one class among many; such is the profusion of creative magnificence, bewildering the imagination which it transcends. The irregular action of undiscovered orbs leads to the suspicion of their existence. Such was the case with Uranus, discovered by Herschel, whose appearances, however, became the puzzle of science until accounted for by physical astronomy. There was acknowledged a "formal incompatibility between the observed motions of Uranus and the hypothesis that he was acted on only by the sun and known planets, according to the laws of universal gravitation." It was not until the 31st of August, 1846, that the question was determined by a paper read by Leverrier to the French institute:—

"How singular," says Dr. Nicol, "that scene in the Academy! A young man, not yet at life's prime, speaking unfalteringly of the necessities of the most august forms of creation—passing onwards where eye never was, and placing his finger on the precise point of space in which a grand orb lay concealed; having been led to its lurking-place by his appreciation of those vast harmonies which stamp the Universe with a consummate perfection! Never was there accomplished a nobler work, and never work more nobly done! It is the eminent characteristic of those labours of Leverrier, that at no moment did his faith ever waver: the majesty of the enterprise was equalled by the resolution and confidence of the man. He trod those dark spaces as Columbus bore himself amid the ocean waste; even when there was no speck or shadow of aught substantial around the wide horizon—holding his conviction in those grand verities which are not the less real because above sense, and pushing onwards towards his New World!"

But still the actual discovery of the wanting planet remained to be accomplished. Dr. Breniker's map of the region in which the new

star was expected aided this, and the changes from it in the actual state of the heavens subsequently were noted at the observatory at Berlin. One night's experiment was sufficient. The new planet was discovered by M. Galle.

The claims of Leverrier to the first discovery of the new planet have been contested by Mr. Adams; the observations of both gentlemen were, however, independent of each other. German science has arbitrated the question, and from it indeed, the planet has received the name of Neptune.

The discovery of Neptune was but the signal for an entire series of planets to troop forth into visibility. The addition of seven new and distinct stars to that group of minor bodies which revolve between Mars and Jupiter, has gone very far—in conjunction with their peculiar planes and motions—to strengthen the conjecture made many years ago, that at some remote age of the past a great planet had occupied the mingled orbits of these planetoids, and had since, by some mighty convulsion, been rent into fragments. Whether these numerous and remarkable bodies are the shreds and vestiges of a shattered world, science can do no more than speculate; but the integrity of Bode's Law of Distances, which such an assumption suggests, induces us to greet the idea with welcome, if we cannot prove its truth.

Not the least interesting among the many discoveries of the telescope, and one which looms up amid the announcements of new planetoids is that effected by Mr. Lassels of Liverpool, with a telescope fashioned by his own hands, of a ring and a satellite to the planet Neptune.

The bare mention of the telescope recalls the many arduous labours in which its assistance has been sought, and the many new and beautiful truths which have been called up, even from night itself, to adorn a new age and a new people. The researches of Sir John Herschel have achieved, for the last half century, a lustre and magnificence which will not be dimmed by any conquests of coming years; and in time to come, the historian, the poet, and the painter shall combine to do him honour, and to express their reverence for those labours of love, which, conducted on a soil thousands of miles from his home and his friends in the sultry atmosphere of a southern clime, have added an imperishable lustre to his name. But the telescope itself has claims, and those of no mean magnitude, to an acknowledgment here. A durable lesson of the superiority of the nobility of thought over the

nobility of birth is taught to all the world by that mighty tube of fifty-six feet in length, with its polished mirror of six feet diameter, which swings between its huge abutments of stone in obedience to the slightest touch, at Blair Castle, in Ireland. With that upward aspiration which separates by such wide distinctions the purposes of genius from the purposes of the crowd, the Earl of Rosse has transcended all the modern efforts and achievements of his class in proclaiming that wealth, title, and power, may be made to administer to the advancement of the world's thought, and the amelioration and instruction of its people.

The most striking of the results obtained by the great telescope of the Earl of Rosse, is a more complete knowledge of the peculiarities of the lunar surface, and the discovery of hundreds of these misty and mysterious nebulae, which float like cobwebs in the unfathomable archway of the night. Grand and imposing are these revelations of a plate of metal. Deep searching is its eye; and no matter that the distance between us and the nebulous mass be so great that a ray of light will require thirty millions of years to accomplish it, the telescope discerns it, paints its picture on the metal disc, and shows us, as the living fact of to day, the actual aspect of the phenomena thirty millions of years ago.

No less interesting and beautiful are those revelations of the economy of the fixed stars, by which we ascertain that their light has as many diversities of colour as the rainbow, and that red, green, blue, and white stars are as common in the fields above, as different coloured flowers are in the green meadows of the earth. The multiple character of many of those stars, which had been deemed to possess an unity of character, is also a striking characteristic. Indeed the discovery that the telescope possessed the power of separating many of the stellar bodies into two, three, four, or five distinct and separate stars, and that these were frequently seen to revolve around each other, while in many instances each separate star burned with a distinct and different colour from the rest, forms the chief feature in Sir John Herschel's memorable "sweeps" of the heavens at the "Cape." As many as six thousand double stars are now known; and, in the majority of instances, the constituent bodies seem to revolve around each other, or in the case of triple stars, of which there are—quoting from memory—about 2,020, one star serves as a centre about which the others revolve. This power, which modern telescopes possess, of

breaking up into distinct bodies what previously appeared as one mass, is a beautiful and satisfactory evidence of the constructive perfection to which such instruments have been brought; and it affords a pleasing illustration of the rapidity of progress of the mechanical arts, when they are seen to attend science in all her flights, and offer their friendly and valuable aid in the construction of more perfect instruments for observation. Even that dim and misty shadow in Orion's belt, though so vague as to be without outline, even under the searching eye of Lord Rosse's six feet mirror, giving no conclusive evidence as to the wonders which lie folded up within it, must write down at some future day its history for us.

The discovery, by Mr. Bond, in September, 1846, that that wisp of light which seems, indeed, but the very shadow of a cloud, is a mass of distinct and separate stars, goes very far to foreshadow the revelations which are yet to come from thence, and affords the hope that the telescope may yet pierce deeper into the great mystery, and unravel for our contemplation new and grander harmonies, and bring us tidings of the majestic wonders which lie hidden in that boundless deep—that sea without a shore!

With equal vigilance and vigour has science, like the eastern genii of enchantment, opened a succession of wonders in every department of nature to man's awakening mind. She has set out upon the trackless deep, where the wild roar of waters and the crash and boom of tempests made hollow dirges in the dark, and gathering the contending elements, she has yoked them in a peaceful unity for the good of man, making even the sunlight a painter of his pictures, and the enchained lightning the messenger of his will. With a frail wire, buried in the earth, or carried underneath the sea, man has learned to wield this most mysterious of all the powers of the universe with a firmer grasp than the Olympian Thunderer himself. Now, with unmatched speed, and a certainty which cannot err, it conveys his thoughts in the very words in which he utters them himself to any distance, bounded only by the limits of the world itself. "The besieged and barricaded city calls its allies to aid, and at the distance of hundreds of leagues, the battalions beat the call to arms, ere yet the ink is dry which penned the summons for their aid. The conquering armies, whom half the circumference of the globe divides from home, bid their compatriots to share their triumph in the first flush of victory; and ere yet the battle cloud is cleared away—ere the last shout of victory has ceased to rend

the heavens, or the last shot to boom along the field, the exulting cry is echoed thousands of miles away, and, like a giant echo, the deep-mouthed cannon open their throats to tell the victory that is won." From the bed where a fond mother languishes, or where the suffering child pines for the green meadows, the blue skies, and crystal fountains of its home; ere the feebly-expressed wish has died upon the pallid lips of the stricken one, the summons has winged to the loved listeners afar, and from the responding heart comes back the cheering words, that ere another hour be past, those whom the dying one holds dear will be seated by the bedside. The dweller in the lone island of the sea, who finds a sweet home where grasses wave and wild birds sweep on tireless wing—he, when he wanders on the surgy shore, sees the tokens of storm booming on the horizon's verge, and hears the first "sugh" of the hurricane as it gathers up its forces for the fight. He has a friend now sailing from a distant port to visit him in his ocean home, and make exchanges of the produce of their respective lands. With a touch of the finger lighter than the sweep of the summer air, he can tell of the storm now brooding on the deep, and by the swift messenger of an electric wire outspeed the wind itself and save a noble ship from wreck and a hundred hearts from a briny grave. Thus the magic messenger of silence speaks in tones that cannot be misunderstood, conveying individual thoughts and feelings, detailing the acts of senators and the decrees of crowns, whispering the words of love and goodwill to every nation under God's sun, and binding them all together in a true and holy brotherhood. Thus it is that miles and leagues of distance vanish, and the men of London whisper in the ears of those in Paris, and give momentary greetings to the dwellers in Boston or New York.

No previous era in the world has exhibited so glorious a spectacle of man conquering brute matter, and rendering its most obdurate elements obedient to his desires. For a penny a mile, the poor man may be winged by the Pegasus of iron into the green fields, and join with nature in her carnival of beauty. For a penny a mile, he may travel where he will with greater speed than fifty years ago could have been accomplished by the bloodhorses of the wealthy of the land. His grandfather went in dread of footpads and highwaymen over ruts and through quagmires, where now he whisks at the rate of a mile a minute over roads of polished steel. The men who dwelt in the land before the nineteenth century dawned, or the knell of the eighteenth had been

toll'd, were content to grope purblind after nightfall, at the risk of property, life, and limb; we who pace the busy streets in this questioning age of wondrous things, have brilliant meteors to guide us on our way, and the invisible streams that thread the iron channels beneath the streets of the paved city keep all night long their jets of flame flickering on the pathway, to render still more complete the blessings of the light. But, like all other things, in the flux and flow of time even the gas light with its wondrous beauty is to become dim before that application of the electric current, which promises, like another sun, to banish darkness from the land.

Not the less wondrous are those results of scientific research which have opened up new and glorious empires of beauty in the minute structure of the human frame, and the harmonies of its marvellous functions. The names of Majendie, Bell, and Liebig, are to become the poetic idols of a future age, when the truths revealed by their labours shall have been fully developed and applied. The unexpected results achieved by Sir Charles Bell in his patient investigations of the nervous system, by which we learn that the various functions of volition, touch, and reflex action have each their appointed channels of operation and communication, have thrown a light over the mysterious economy of the mind in its relation to the body, which promises to future inquirers a harvest of the most noble fruit. None the less wonderful are those discoveries of the philosopher of Giessen, which reveal to us the intimate relations of all organised beings to the lifeless elements of matter, and the chain of dependence established by chemical law. Thus we learn that, in the blood which flows in our veins the immediate cause of vitality is the very metal with which we make our railroad bars and build the ponderous engine; that the very brilliancy of colour and vitality of the blood itself depends on the minute atom of iron which each globule contains, and that if that be deficient life must wane. From the labours of Liebig, too, we learn that all our foods have corresponding qualities, and that the old dogmas which upheld the foods derived from the animal kingdom, above those obtained from the green herb, were fictions and fancies all, having no other substance than that which gives a colouring to dreams. Passing the applications of these principles to agriculture and the industrial arts of life, we have still more of the poetry of science in those elaborate investigations of Faraday, by which he has analysed the electric spark itself, and traced out the laws and relations of light

and magnetism. With the powerful battery of Mr. Groves, and the guiding discernment of his own genius, he has arrested the ray of light in its swift and noiseless passage, and made it obedient to his very touch. Pushing on in these noble researches, he has arrived at the beautiful conclusion that electricity and magnetism, with all their manifold modes of manifestation, and heat and light with their endless diversity of phenomena—whether gleaming in the dewy light of the morning star, subduing the rugged landscape under the form of chaste moonlight, or parching the herbage in a sultry summer's noon—are all but diversified forms of one common agency, and that heat, light, electricity and magnetism are only the several features of one universal law, and point for the origin of their phenomena to one simple and central fact.

Thus also while the age has brought to light myriads of truths unknown before, to girdle the human race with a new circle of blessings, it has rediscovered things which have slept for ages amid the dust of perished empires, and which waited in ages past at the beckon of a now-perished people. And long before the bell shall toll for the half century which has just begun, the world will have unravelled the secret of how far truth and fable have been mingled together in the process of mesmerism, and how far the art or science of vital magnetism is capable of useful application. Certain it is, that this power, whatsoever it be, was known to the priests and teachers in centuries gone by, and was used by them in mystic ceremonies for purposes of terror and fraud, for the diffusion of a false religion and the maintenance of priestly power. But the new age shall use its wonders in a nobler work, and setting its back on collusion and falsehood, seek to apply this mysterious power in the alleviation of suffering, the prolongation of life, and the unlocking of the secrets of the mind.

Akin to the influence of a steadfast look or wave of the hand, which, in those possessing mesmeric power, suffices to make a man a mere machine obedient to the will of the operator, is that discovery of the means of alleviating pain by a chemical agency, and which has attained its highest development in the material called chloroform. Emphatic teachings have we here of the value of researches and experiments which when performed seemed to those whose minds were circumscribed by present pence and shillings, to be but an amusement for the childish or the insane. From those painful experiments of Sir Humphrey Davy, by which he ascertained, almost at the cost of

his own life, the effects of nitrous gas upon the human frame when inhaled into the lungs, has resulted that grand auxiliary to surgery which, first manifesting itself in the inhalation of ether, has ripened into a judicious use of a more safe and certain agency. Enter the room where anguish racks the frame almost beyond its strength, and in an instant, by a magic talisman, the agony is charmed away—the frame, a moment since convulsed, lies calm and tranquil as an infant's sleep. Visit the scene where science rescues life by surgical means, or where a limb is forfeited to save the frame. No fear, no pallor, no clenched teeth, nor hard-drawn breath, nor moan of agony, tell how a brave spirit struggles with torture that might awe the boldest. A placid smile rests on the patient's face, and in complete repose he lies entirely free from pain; and waking, learns that, in that brief pause of consciousness, the incubus which weighed upon his very soul, and checked the beating of his heart, is gone—has passed away as in a dream—through the subtle influence of this magic spell.

So has science, like an angel of peace, flung down her golden gifts on man, surrounding his life with wonder, and awakening within his heart a noble sentiment of thankfulness, and a recognition of the wisdom and benevolence of the Creator of all things. As vice creeps back to its dark den and hides its head from the dazzling light of knowledge which is now beautifying the world; as human life is lengthened by a wider appreciation of its worth, and the banishment of habits and prejudices which heretofore have robbed it of its music and its years; as slavery and serfdom sink on one hand, and freedom, fresh from its grassy sleep of centuries wakes up upon the other; as war with its red hand and blighting breath sinks down to die upon the turf whereon the nations meet in amity, and sign a contract of eternal friendship without state parchment, but on the tablets of their living hearts; while these things herald the dawn of a new era of liberty and love, let us cherish the blessings which science has bestowed upon us; nor dim, with the feuds, follies, or wrongs, the rainbow colours of the half-circle of years which have just dawned upon us.

ON THE FORMATION OF AN HERBARIUM.

A RECREATION FOR THE YOUNG.

Look on these flowers! As o'er an altar shedding,
 O'er Milton's page, soft light from coloured urns!
 They are the links man's heart to nature wedding,
 When to her breast the prodigal returns.

They are from lone wild places, forest dingles,
 Fresh banks of many a low-voiced hidden stream,
 Where the sweet star of eve looks down and mingles
 Faint lustre with the water-lilies' gleam.

They are from where the soft winds play in gladness,
 Covering the turf with pearly blossom-showers;
 Too richly dowered, oh! friend, are we for sadness,—
 Look on an empire—mind and nature—ours.

MRS. HEMANS.

THE practical study of Botany is a source of the most pure gratification, opening, as it does, a new world of life, lying at our very feet, and furnishing food for pleasant thoughts at all times and seasons. Putting aside its high utility as a branch of natural science, it is in itself one of the most pure and innocent enjoyments in which we can possibly indulge. Some of the most delightful memories of our own are associated with the herbarium. We have been led into some of the most sweet and sunny spots of "Merrie England," in quest of specimens for drying and preserving. In presenting the reader with a few directions for the preparation of botanical specimens, we shall presume that he has a love for botanical science, and would wish to adopt that course in the formation of a collection of plants which would prove most useful in advancing his studies; for, although dried plants are objects of great beauty, and are frequently collected and preserved for their beauty alone, yet those who most need information on this subject are those who, just entering upon

botanical studies, are desirous of knowing something more of the plants they collect than the mere colours of their blossoms. The directions we shall give will be those which we follow in our own practice, but they are, of course, subject to all the modifications which the taste or means of the individual may suggest.

In the first place you must get your plants; this is a work for all seasons, and not an amusement for summer merely. The most exquisite specimens of mosses and lichens are only to be obtained in the winter, and are in their highest perfection during sharp frosty weather. To know the best spots and situations for particular tribes of plants must be a matter of experience; but, at commencing, the student will do well to collect plants of a dry woody texture, as ferns, heaths, grasses, and mosses. They should always be collected, if possible, in dry weather, as the trouble of preparing is increased ten-fold if they are gathered wet with rain; this, of course, cannot always be ensured, and it will often happen that choice specimens may be obtained during unfavourable weather, when it might not be convenient to visit the same spot on more favourable occasions. The moment a plant is obtained, the process of drying should be commenced; for this purpose it will be necessary to have a collecting box. These are usually made of tin, and may be purchased at the herbalists' shops. We have always used a box made of milled-board, covered with leather, and furnished with suitable fastenings, after the fashion of a small portmanteau. The larger the box the better, as the specimens can then be placed in it, root and stem entire, without breaking. Convenience of transit, however, will not admit the use of a box so large as many plants require; the size we have found most convenient, both for facility of carriage and for preservation of the specimens, is about eighteen inches in length by eight in width, and about six inches deep. Before starting from home the box should be about half filled with strips of dry blotting, or coarse sugar-paper, cut to fit it, and several pieces of cardboard covered also with blotting-paper. A strong pocket-book, with some pieces of blotting-paper, will also be found very useful for small and choice plants. A strong pruning-knife will answer all purposes for cutting and digging up. When you determine on taking up a plant, look carefully about for the most neat and perfect specimen, and then dig it up carefully, and with the root as entire as possible. It is impossible to get more than a small portion of the roots of some trailing and creeping plants, but,

whenever it is possible, obtain the roots, stem, leaves, flower, and fruit of every plant complete. Nothing but practice will enable you to determine the best mode of procedure in all cases; this is a matter of detail and study. You will find some plants curl up and wither a few minutes after being removed from the soil (this is particularly the case with water plants and some succulent land plants), while others may be neglected for hours without much injury. Having obtained your plant, place it between some pieces of blotting-paper, and put several of the slips of cardboard above and below it. Lay the plant so that it will dry flat and preserve its natural character; if too thick in foliage, it will be better to break off some of its branches, for if the leaves lie thick upon each other, it can scarcely ever become a good specimen. Having filled your box with plants, alternating with slips of cardboard and blotting paper, you are at liberty to continue your pilgrimage, and develope all the green heroism you may have, or to return home; at least, as far as we are concerned.

For completing the drying process, it will be necessary to have a quantity of porous paper, such as good blotting or coarse sugar paper. A few thin pieces of flat wood are also necessary, and some leather straps furnished with buckles. A convenient size for the boards is about sixteen inches by twelve; we use various sizes ourselves, according to the sizes of the plants. Let a board be warmed at the fire, and then warm a few pieces of the paper and lay upon it; lay one plant on this, taking care to place the leaves smooth, and to bend the flower aside, so that the leaves do not touch it, in order that its colour may not be deteriorated by contact. Pile up boards, paper, and plants, in this way, until six or eight, or perhaps a dozen, specimens have been so managed; then strap them round tightly, or pile a few books or weights upon them to press them, and let them lie in a dry place, where there are no smoky vapours, or fumes that are likely to injure them. If the plants are very moist, and particularly if they are aquatic, they must be tended very carefully; take them out after three or four hours, and dry the papers well at the fire, and replace them. If they are of a dry nature this need only be performed once a day until they are quite dry. Some plants will be found to have produced and ripened their seed while this drying process has been going on: thistles, dandelions, hawkweeds, and other compound flowers, invariably do this, and the beginner will frequently be surprised to

find, that in the place of a rich flower, he has a ball of downy seeds, the change having taken place during the drying of the plant. Some of the small spurge will begin to eject their seeds in all directions, with great force, the moment they are released from the pressure of the drying boards, although the plant appears dry and dead. The foliage of some pines and fir trees is apt to crumble into powder after the drying process; this is owing to the resin which they contain, and which gets hard and brittle. The best method in this case is to plunge the plant into boiling water for a few minutes before placing it between the boards for drying. The silver fir is particularly liable to this, and some specimens become nothing else than leafless sticks in the course of a few years. As a rule, it is a bad plan to place plants in water in order to revive them before they are laid out for drying, although, with judgment, it may sometimes be useful. These remarks apply to the ordinary flowering plants of the fields, but there are some which offer rich rewards in their beauty and economy, if the student can succeed in preparing them. The extensive class of fungi are among these, and they are mostly very difficult of preparation. Some of the dry, firm kinds, as the agarics, may be wrapped up carefully in clean blotting paper, and laid near the fire, or in some warm place, to dry, and with care will turn out very good specimens; but those of a moist, delicate nature, will tax the ingenuity of a beginner. To speak individually in this case, we usually make a few trips during autumn to collect these plants; we take with us a small collecting box, furnished with blotting paper, for the dry and firm kinds, and a few tin boxes, nearly filled with silver sand, for the moist and jelly-like specimens: these latter should be carefully handled, and when a quantity of sand has been removed from a box, the fungus should be laid in it and the sand gently strewed upon it, until it is perfectly covered. Some botanists have very large sand boxes in which to dry their fungi, but experience has satisfied ourselves that it is better to have several smaller boxes made of tin, so that only a few specimens can be placed together; and this method gives the additional advantage of enabling us to put specimens of a kindred together, as it is a less easy matter to determine the species after drying than at the time they are collected. The specimens may be transferred from the collecting boxes into these larger boxes, or may be dried in those in which they were first placed, and after having been carefully covered with sand, must be placed near a fire. They will require to be taken

out and placed in fresh dry sand every two or three days; or if the boxes can be placed on the side of a stove, where there is a fire, and with the lids off, they may remain for a week or ten days, when the whole of the moisture will have evaporated, and the specimens will be obtained as perfect in form as when gathered from the fields.

The plants now obtained in a dry state require to be disposed of. They may be either packed away together as they are, or mounted on paper. It is well to put duplicate specimens in a box or drawer, with a label attached to them, indicating the name, class, and order of the plant, and also the place of its growth. Grasses, dried carefully, and tied up in bunches, each species by itself, and accurately labelled, may be kept in this manner very conveniently. So may ferns, heaths, and many other plants of a dry and firm texture, which are capable of being handled without injury. But to render them objects of art, and to exhibit their botanical character to the greatest advantage, they must be nicely mounted on paper, a task which calls for considerable neatness and skilful manipulation.

The best paper for this purpose is a stout, hard cartridge; we have always used imperial paper, and have obtained it, of a quality admirably suited to the purpose, of Mr. Bird, of Ave Maria Lane. Of course, a paper of suitable quality may be obtained almost anywhere, but this surpasses almost any we have ever elsewhere seen. If imperial paper is used, it will be best to cut each sheet into four, and this size will suit the majority of plants. In the case of some specimens which cannot be mounted on this sized paper, a half sheet may be used, and the paper and plant folded down together in the middle of the sheet in order to render it uniform with the others. Many plants, as for instance, the camomile, flowering rush, and daffodil, are too tall to be mounted on quarter sheets in an upright position, and they may be laid on with the flower upwards, and the stem bent upwards and downwards as many times as necessary, so that the whole plant may be placed upon the paper. The best cement is a solution of gum arabic; common paste, or glue, will answer very well, but, whatever material may be used, it must be exceedingly clean; and a few drops of corrosive sublimate in alcohol, should be added to it, to prevent the attacks of insects or mould. There are many ways of fixing the specimen to the paper. Some very delicate plants, as minute ferns, and Alpine plants, may be fixed close with the gum, and further secured by a few stitches of thread passed round

their stems. Stubborn, woody plants, as holly, hawthorn, ling, &c., will require to be strapped down firmly by straps of paper. In mounting such as these, first lay the plant on the paper, and mark with a pencil at those points where the straps will be most needed, and then make a slit in the paper at each mark, just wide enough to admit your paper straps; then lay the plant down, and pass the straps over the branches at the points corresponding with your pencil marks, and bring the ends of the straps through the paper to the back, and there fasten them down with cement: this method renders the specimens exceedingly neat in appearance, and secures them firmly to the paper. Some which have pliable and flat leaves, as dead nettle, ivy, &c., may be glued down close, without either straps or stitches. The next thing will be to label them: let this be done neatly, and with great care that the labelling is correct. If you are acquainted with both the Linnæan and the Natural System, it will be well to register the plant under both the methods of classification. At the top of the paper, and in the centre, a consecutive number should be written, indicating the number of the plant in your collection, and having no reference to its botanical character. On one side, at the top, you will write the class and order of the plant according to the Natural System, and on the other side the class and order in the Linnæan arrangement. At the bottom on the right hand side, you will write the name of the plant in English and in Latin, the name of the place from whence it was obtained, and the date when collected; for example:—

(No. 87.)	
NATURAL SYSTEM.	LINNÆAN SYSTEM.
Class—Exogenæ.	Class—Syngenesia.
Sub-Class—Monopetalæ	Order—Polygamia Æqualis.
Order—Compositaceæ	(All the florets furnished
(Several flowers united in one receptacle.)	with stamens and pistils.)
Genus—Leontodon.	
<div> Leontodon Taraxacum. Dandelion. Cheshunt, Herts, March, 1842. </div>	

It is highly important that paper of an uniform size should be used, and that only one kind of plant be placed on each page. It is absolutely impossible to refer to specimens at an after time, if they are mixed with each other on the same sheets of paper. The study will also be greatly facilitated, if a catalogue is kept of the specimens, arranged under the separate botanical divisions to which they belong, as also in accordance with the consecutive number, as collected. By reference to the catalogue, you will be enabled to ascertain what species you require to complete any particular genera, as also the particular localities where you have been most successful in obtaining rare or choice plants.

Those whose means will not enable them to obtain all the materials we have enumerated, can still pursue the study, and enjoy all its delightful associations and instructions, by the help of a very moderate amount of ingenuity. The plants may be collected, and brought home in the hand, and after being duly dried and prepared, may be mounted on the leaves of old newspapers, and then stitched together. Very beautiful imprints of leaves and dissected portions of plants may be obtained by laying the specimens, of which copies are required, between two leather cushions, on one of which printers' ink has been thinly spread, and then removing them to a sheet of white paper and pressing them down gently with the hand. A little experience will enable the student to obtain beautiful impressions of leaves, petals, and other parts of plants; and as they are quite permanent, they will supersede in some measure, the necessity of expensive works on physiological botany.

The reward of your trouble is a great one. In turning over these leaves from Nature's own book, your may travel all your adventures again and again, without the expense of railway fare, or the inconvenience of dust and rain. That clematis calls to your mind the luxuriant hedge-rows and chalk hills of Kent. That brilliant specimen of *helianthemum vulgare* brings you a picture of the rocky glen and wild scenery of the rugged mountains where it was gathered. This pretty *epilobium* gives you a reminiscence of a sweet, quiet spring, which gushes forth in a lovely green nook in a little village in Buckinghamshire. Another gives you a pleasant memory of a lonely green wood, where the thrush and the blackbird carol joyously at sunrise. A little Alpine plant, or even that common flower, the *linaria cymbalaria*, will tell you of some old castle, which, with its high

bastion and massive crumbling walls, hangs frowning upon the edge of a cliff above the foam of the sea. In fact, no end of sunny memories, and sweet associations of woodland rambles, country gossip, and rustic simplicity and beauty, are always to be found in these dry plants.

“ The flowers, in silence, seem to breathe
Such thoughts as language cannot tell.”



FOOTSTEPS OF THE SEASONS.

“ So forth issued the Seasons of the year.
 First lusty Spring, all dight in leaves of flowers,
 That freshly budded and new blooms did bear,
 In which a thousand birds had built their bowers,
 That sweetly sung to call forth paramours ;
 And in his hand a javelin he did bear,
 And on his head (as fit for warlike stoures)
 A gilt engraven morion he did wear ;
 That as some did him love, so others did him fear.

“ Then comes the jolly Summer, being dight
 In a thin silken cassock coloured green,
 That was unlined all, to be more light ;
 And on his head a girlond well beseene
 He wore, from which, as he had chauffed beene
 The sweat did drop ; and in his hand he bore
 A bowe and shaftes, as he in forest greene
 Had hunted late the libbard or the boare,
 And now would bathe his limbes, with labor heated sore.

“ Then came the Autumn, all in yellow clad,
 As though hejoyed in his plenteous store,
 Laden with fruits that made him laugh full glad
 That he had banished hunger, which to fore
 Had by the belly oft him pinched sore :
 Upon his head a wreath, that was enrolled
 With ears of corn of every sort, he bore ;
 And in his hand a sickle he did hold
 To reap the ripened fruits the which the earth had yold.

“ Lastly came Winter, clothed all in frieze,
 Chattering his teeth for cold that did him chill ;
 Whilst on his hoary beard his breath did freese,
 And the dull drops that from his purpled bill,
 As from a limbeck did adown distil ;
 In his right hand a tipped staff he held,
 With which his feeble steps he stayed still ;
 For he was faint with cold, and weak with eld ;
 That scarce his loosed limbes he able was to weld.”

SPENSER.

Grandly whirl the seasons in their glorious march—grandly rolls the great old world, round and round for ever and ever; now basking in a blaze of light, now buried in deep winter gloom. Softly sometimes tread the Seasons, softly on their velvet feet; boldly sometimes do they dash along, effecting terrible revolutions with their invisible but potent fingers. The astronomer finds in the progress of seasonal changes a verification of his long-laboured theories; the moralist, illustrations of his choicest dogmas; the poet, a series of symbols and images; and the observer of nature, pictures, pleasures, and pursuits innumerable. While man watches, the tide ebbs and flows, bearing upon its surface the scattered leaves of the tree of life, on which, at every phase of seasonal progression, are developed the emblems of incessant change. To the naturalist the year unfolds a series of subjects for comparison and observation, and, with a keen eye, he watches the footprints of time for the instruction and delight afforded by a knowledge of the changes of the out-door world, where

“ All is concentrated in a life intense,
Where not a beam, nor air, nor leaf is lost,
But hath a part of being, and a sense
Of that which is of all creator and defence.”

In a great city the true character of the soul is lost, and nature becomes a dumb, unmeaning phantasy. How miserable the narrow strip of dingy sky to the dread magnificence of heaven, when seen from the green shoulder of some sky-cleaving hill! How wretched the monotony of brick walls, compared with the blue uplands, the green meadows, the clustering woods, and the light fleecy clouds, flinging their shadows upon the smiling landscape. How painful the eternal roar, and dust, and traffic in the narrow streets, compared with the sweet voices, the sunny glades, the green canopies, the solemn solitudes, and the life-inspiring breezes of nature! And if we cannot dwell upon the heathery hills, or in green shady nooks, let us dwell amid rocks and cairns, and hold communion with nature in her own rugged wilds. Better to be shaken and perilled by the rushing storm, better to seek for music in the howling blast and swoop of the tempest, or “in the boom of the ocean when coming home;” for there the soul may drink in beauty, drawing its life from the broad and deep current which sustains the growth of season upon season.

“ Who does not welcome Spring’s sweet gentleness,
That, like a friend, long waited for in vain,
Comes laughing in, and wafts away distress,
Sending its joy through spirit and through plain ?

HOWITT.

After the earth has been rendered desolate by the unsparing hand of winter, the trees bereft of their green garments, the flowers buried in their graves, and the land parched up by crackling frosts, or buried beneath rolling floods, the gentle Spring comes with lightsome heart and sunny smile, bringing with her the golden sunshine of another world, and the joyous tears of angels made holy by the breath of God, to revive the worn heart of nature. She comes with tearful eyes, and sunny feet, and golden tresses dripping from the crystal waters of her sheeny home, to fling gold, and green, and beauty, and perfume over all the budding and replenished earth. Birds leave their sunny skies afar to greet her with their songs ; the breezes come from the warm south, toiling their long journey across the wide, wide sea, to gather up the odours which she scatters over hill and dale ; the flowers wake up from their long winter sleep to gaze upon her loving smiles ; and the broad, green earth exults for its verdurous beauty, and bounds with a lusty and impassioned joy.

At her fairy touch, the emerald gates of the season fly open, and display a wide expanse of beauty—a landscape glittering in slanting sunlight, with swelling uplands gliding away into the distance like gently heaving waves ; and beyond all, the dark green lands of summer, where the primeval forests stretch away in their grandeur, and where the breezes float over valley and stream, laden with the odours of wild thyme, and resonant with the dreamy music of the wild.

As the new light spreads over the earth, old Winter gazes out from his sleety lair, and when his glazed eyes meet her serene and lovely smile, his teeth chatter with dread, for he knows that now his empire must fall. He sends forth a bleak north wind among the ghastly skeletons of last summer, and over the new buds of spring, and this, overhearing the husky rustling of the crisped reeds, which whisper with chattering and frozen breath, severs them with his keen shears, and hurls them prostrate on the waters of the marsh, blanched, withered, and dead, as trophies of his master’s potency. Still seeking to regain his despotism, but too weak to fling his icy chains again upon the earth, he crushes a few early flowers between his trembling fingers

and scatters them in ruins upon the ground; he breathes out a blight upon the forest, but the trees heed not his desolating spell, and only grow more vigorous and green with the new life with which they have been endowed. He gathers himself up with one last desperate effort, but the warm air oppresses him, the sweet odours annoy him, the light blinds and confuses him, he raves wildly and clutches at the air; and, with the last pulses of his heart, the hoary tyrant totters in his footsteps, his long withered fingers let fall his icy sceptre from their convulsive grasp, and he sinks down in dying agonies upon the soft mossy carpet of the rejoicing earth; and, behold! his reign is at an end.

The sights and sounds of spring have a tenfold vigour and freshness. It is the season of new life, new hope, and new beauty. The leafing of the trees, the unfolding of the flowers, which follow each other in quick succession, till the earth is mantled all over with lovely forms and glittering hues; the voices of the sweet birds singing their songs of love, all repay us for the frosts and sleets of winter, and lead us into the ardent embraces of the refulgent summer.

“The budding floweret blushes at the light,
 The meeds be sprinkled with the yellow hue,
 In daisied mantles is the mountain dight,
 The neshe young cowslip bendeth with the dew;
 The trees enleaved, into heaven straught,
 When gentle winds do blow, to whistling dire is brought.
 The evening comes, and brings the dew along,
 The rodie welkin sheeneth to the eyne,
 Around the alestake minstrels sing the song,
 Young ivy round the door-post doth entwine.”

CHATTERTON.

Before winter has well retreated from the fields, a few of the earliest flowers appear, those free, wild children of the earth, and create a new sensation akin to that which accompanies those faint echoes of distant music which we sometimes hear in dreams. Milton invokes them, in his “*Lycidas*,” in a strain full of the sweetest poetry, soft and soothing, like the fabled melody of the dying swan.

“Ye vallies low, where the mild whispers rise,
 Of shades and wanton winds, and gushing brooks,
 On whose fresh laps the swart star sparely looks,
 Throw hither all your quaint enamel’d eyes,
 That on the green turf suck the honied showers,
 And purple all the ground with vernal flowers.”

Among the first spring flowers we find the daisy that "never dies," the dwarf furze, and the little chick-weed, although these may better be regarded as the few connecting links between autumn and spring; for winter never kills them quite, and when the frosts break up they put forth a new show of blossoms, as though proud of their sufferings in struggling to keep the world from being flowerless. Then comes the little whitlow grass, and the meek speedwell,

"Looking up with gentle eye of blue
To the younger sky of the self-same hue,"

and that most lovely of spring flowers, the snowdrop; may the blessings of heaven rest upon it, for its unsullied beauty; how beauteous in its snowy whiteness this gentle firstling of the year, tender and pure, and heedless of clouds and storms. We think of the time when, long, long ago, we were ourselves in the budding spring-time of life, and when our childish hopes were all confined within the old house, which stood on the corner of a wide common, embosomed in ivy and tall trees, with its thatched roof, its old fantastic porch, and great, grim spectre chimneys. Then we saw and felt the changes of the seasons, as though they and their influences passed through our young hearts. Then when winter came, the dazzling snow lay like a cold and quiet shroud over every hill and dale; there were long icicles hanging to the window frames, and from the branches of the trees, and when they glittered in the sun we thought that some gentle fairy must have hung them there, to make old Winter smile. Every blade of grass was dusted with diamonds and glittering sparks, and the grey sky hung above the snow, as though dazzled and spell-bound by its whiteness. Then at night there were strange sounds, hollow dirge-like moanings among the trees, and the dead leaves and broken branches made a husky and a doleful rattling out of doors; and our little hearts began to throb with fear. Then we thought of sailors on the frozen ocean, and of those who had died in shipwreck, and whose dead bodies had been swallowed up by the boiling surges of the sea. But, oh! no pen or tongue can tell how our childish spirits fluttered when we found the first snowdrop of the spring. Then we thought of all the flowers that were coming to greet us with their smiles; of the sweet birds who all the live-long summer day sing songs of joy and love. Then have we thought in our childish hope that summer would soon come, and then there would be no

frost or snow, but sunshine and soft air, and we would go away into the green woods with our merry companions, to gather buttercups and daisies, and blue-bells and heather-blooms.

“What wak’st thou in the heart, O Spring?—
The human heart, with all its dreams and sighs—
Thou that giv’st back so many a buried thing,
Restorer of forgotten harmonies;
Fresh songs and scents break forth where’er thou art—
What wak’st thou in the heart?

“Looks of familiar love, that never more,
Never on earth, our aching eyes shall meet,
Past words of welcome to our household door,
And vanish’d smiles, and sounds of parted feet—
Spring! midst the murmurs of thy flowering trees,
Why, why reviv’st thou these?”

There is no month of the year so dreary as February, but even then we find the grass green upon the meadows, and the hedges putting forth innumerable slender stems and delicate green leaves. In the meadows we find the pretty vernal crocus, invested with a loveliness of its own, and one of the most welcome plants of spring. In the places where it abounds, the meadows are radiant spots, the full-blown cups stand open to invite the first butterfly—and it offers some store to the diligent bees when flowers are scarce. In the hedges too we find the dandelion, the “the sunflower of spring,” displaying its golden stars, and giving a cheerful aspect to the quiet country lanes. Then come the daffodil, the mezezeon, the celandine, the violets, primroses and cowslips, and a long train of flowers: and as the season advances, legions of buttercups come into bloom, dressing all the fields in a gaudy yellow livery, and spreading a carpet of burnished gold for the fairy footsteps of the laughing summer.

In the woods we find nature busy at work preparing delicate trellis work, rich tapestry, and bowers of enchantment. The wood anemone begins to display its snowy buds and delicate leaves, and it will soon cover every spot of ground; contrasting beautifully with the deep blue of the wild hyacinth, and the pale yellow of the primrose, while trembling in youth and beauty under every bush and tree.

Nature makes such rapid progress that we are sometimes startled by the wonderful effect which a warm shower, or a day or two of sunshine will produce. A dim sprinkling of green comes over the goose-

berry bushes, and in two or three days they are in full leaf. Old stone walls, and trees which grow in quiet nooks, wear beautiful colours by the drapery of mosses, lichens, fungi, and liverworts which cover them. We observe these parasites of every conceivable form and colour, silver grey, rich velvety green, pale primrose, deep orange, and tints which deepen down from pale amber to the rich hue of the chestnut, or to the jetty blackness which enwraps the boles and knots of the great oaks. Here and there in the wood, the ivy has formed a thick bower, and when our eyes glance upon its deep green, we have dim thoughts of ripe corn fields, and scarlet poppies, and all the garniture of summer, forgetting that the trees above us are not yet in leaf. There are always a great many little water runnels, clear and sparkling, as they go tripping along through green banks of wet hair moss, where the pale green sprays of the harebell, and the leaves of the modest primrose betoken that there will soon be many blossoms there. Even during March, while the trees are yet leafless, the forest begins to kindle into life; on a mild, sunny day, merry troops of winged insects are dancing in the golden light, and frisking overhead, as if overjoyed at the return of spring; or perchance the warmth hath awakened them so suddenly from their earthly sepulchre to a world of new life and beauty, that they are not strictly *compos mentis*, but in fact somewhat crazy and intoxicated with sunbeams. By the end of April the whole forest is clothed in a garment of emerald green, and every leaf glistens in the sunshine. The stately elm is well covered with its bright mantle of leaves. The oak has a strange reddish tinge, as though he had slept so soundly during the frosts, that on being awakened suddenly by the strong glare of light, he knew not where he was, and in his confusion had thrust on his worn-out autumn clothes, instead of the new ones which had been provided for him. That loveliest of all forest trees, the beech, begins to show its brownish purple sprays, and the Spanish chestnuts open their great fan-like leaves of lovely green, and wherever we turn, either in lane or forest, we encounter the soft emerald hue of the lime, the very personification of spring, in the delicious green of its leaves, and the rich perfume of its many blossoms. Then too the silvery birch quivers and trembles in the gentle breeze with its ovate leaves and catkins, so fragile and delicate in its outline, that it is more like a spirit haunting the solitudes than a tree of any kind. The blackthorns which grow in clumps in the woods, and which hedge the fields and

meadows for miles and miles, now become covered with their milk-like blossoms, and the fruit trees in the orchards and gardens begin to look like mountains of crimson or snowy foam. Whichever way we turn, we see the broad earth mantled in a garniture of beauty, and robed from head to foot with leaves and flowers.

But the joy of spring is its exuberance of song. What charms would there be in forest dell, in green lane, or on the mountain's side, if there were no voices for the echoes to play with? That heavenly music so subdues us with its influence, that our pulses throb with exultation, and our hearts beat high with thankfulness. Who could cherish sordid thoughts or misanthropic feelings while listening to their impassioned outbursts of song, wantoning in very joyousness and buoyancy of heart? Verily, birds were sent to give us a foretaste of the music which haunts those higher spheres, where the songs of happy souls make melodies for ever. Before a leaf is on the trees, we hear the rich whistle of the blackbird, and the loud note of the missel-thrush; the song-thrush, too, will now and then strike up a few notes from the leafless brake, and then pause to listen to the echoes which his own song has awakened.

And as the year wears on, little birds come in by twos and threes; the wryneck, with its beautiful plumage, marked with every variety of dazzling colour; the tiny willow-wren, with its shrill chirp, hopping and skipping, and flitting among the osier-beds; the blue titmouse, with its soft plumage; and the gay yellow-hammer, and the wood-lark; all make such a "sweet piping" that the woods echo with their songs; and in the deep green solitude we hear the mournful cooing of the wood-pigeon, as he shares with his mate her watchfulness; and in every lane and field we hear the spring-note of the cuckoo, which, either from its peculiar sound, or from the memories which crowd upon us when we hear it, seems to ring through our very hearts, and make the blood mantle to our cheeks with inexpressible excitement. And when the wood-ant begins to build her nest, and butterflies and gaudy moths go sporting in the sunbeams, and when the hedges are filled with fragrant and snowy blooms, and the whole floor of earth is jewelled with unnumbered flowers, the blessed nightingale comes, like a spirit which has winged its lonely flight from heaven, to tell how angels sigh and sorrow for us. In the solemn stillness, when night has wrapped the earth in her soft mantle, and the flowers sit weeping in dewy silence, the woods gush with magic melodies, some-

times low and plaintive, like the sobbing of some sorrowful spirit, who seeks for sympathy for his woes among the weeping flowers, and then in rich swelling tones, like those fair sounds which echo amid eastern bowers, or, as the hosannahs of worshipping angels, floating over peaceful waters in the pleasant lands of Paradise. Oh! truly, if aught of that holy music which enraptured our first parents in Eden has been at all preserved, the song of the nightingale is indeed a fragment.

And now, as the months wear on, and May comes with its miles and miles of snowy hawthorn blossoms, the gentle Spring, so loved and greeted, must resign her inheritance to her devoted sister—Summer. And so the Seasons keep their whirling round, and form the cycle of the changing year. The Seasons glide into each other noiselessly, as light and darkness at dawning or at nightfall. From the bleak Winter comes the budding Spring, bursting as it were from the obdurate granite of a frozen world to dissolve the death-spell, and to replenish all things with new beauty and with life. And when Summer comes, she will find the earth all dight with flowers, the trees proud and exulting for the green drapery which they wear upon their lusty arms, and every hill and dale echoing a happy, happy welcome. Now fainter and fainter echoes the voice of Spring as she turns aside, singing as she quits the scene—

“The Summer is hastening, on soft wings borne,
Ye may press the grape, ye may bind the corn!
For me, I depart to a brighter shore;
Ye are marked by care, ye are mine no more.
I go where the loved, who have left you, dwell,
And the flowers are not Death’s:—fare ye well, farewell!”

MRS. HEMANS.

Spring, Summer, and Autumn are the twin sisters of seasonal beauty, and each has consigned to her duties and labours of love, and missions of fruition and loveliness. When Spring gazes for the last time upon the green hills where she has been tripping with her silver feet, and sees the constellated flowers which she has sprinkled, like glittering dust, over every glen and glade, she sheds a tear of mute sorrow, that she must leave a world which her own sunny fingers have made so redolent of beauty; and her work being done, she resigns her sceptre to the golden-haired Summer, and departs to her own flowery home, till she shall be required once more to toil through blinding sleet, and cover the bosom of the frost-rent earth with verdure, and to awaken

the echoes of the dark forests with canticles and songs. Now from the bright cloud-land comes the loving Summer, and as soon as her light feet have touched the expectant bosom of the earth, she flings wide her green doors, and looks with complacent gladness upon the sheeny tapestry, and bowers of floral enchantment, which the gentle Spring has enwoven for her delight. She sees a broad landscape hung with green foliage; rich meadows, glowing into billowy seas of colour; and every bush and brake so glittering with golden dust, that it seems as though the heaven had rained down all its stars, and had powdered the very ground with dazzling orbs. Her fairy form is robed in leaves and flowers of every hue, her sunny brow is veiled by silver showers, and her golden hair is enwoven with honeysuckles and harebells. Her temple is the wide arching rainbow; her priestesses are sunbeams; her ministers and vassals, flowers; her choristers are the sweet birds which pass their days in live-long melody and bliss; and her worshippers are all things in heaven and earth, which have beauty for their inheritance.

When in the full possession of her queendom, Summer commences her work of making perfect that which her sister Spring had so well begun. She glides through the deep woods, beneath shady hedges, and in dell and dingle, where a twilight obscurity reigns at noon, and then she breathes softly on tender buds, and kisses the lowly blossoms. She waters the meadows with soft showers, and wherever she finds a branch or a root, she sprinkles them all over with leaves and blossoms.

But when is it fairly summer-time? Is it when the first blossom opens on the water-flag, or the first leaf upon the robinia? Is it when the blackcap first utters its deep and joyous song, or when the nightingale has ceased to startle the echoes of the night? Is it when time has brought us once more to the mid season of June? Out upon dates, and almanacks, and registers, smelling eternally of quarter-day and taxes! It is summer-time when the fields of corn are coming into bloom, when the bean and the red clover give their combined perfumes to the lightest zephyr that flits from field to footpath; and when the red foxgloves hang out their speckled bells; while overhead the woodbine throws its trailing banners of floating green, and burnished gold. When the meadow-sweet flings its dreamy odours over the glassy stream, as if striving to bring it under a spell of enchantment. When rich sheets of aroma float over every hill and

field from hawthorn buds and new-mown hay, and each passing breeze seems intoxicated with perfume and delight. "When vagrant zephyrs come sporting along, as if commissioned to sweeten your path; when the hay-field, ready for the scythe, plays in gentle glittering undulations, as if it were a sea of beryl. When the rich pastures, starred over with the sweet, though lowly blossoms of the white clover, breathe balm and honey combined, and the industrious bees are flitting from flower to flower, softening the air with their drowsy songs of delight; when the trembling poplar salutes you with all its leaves, and the birds, many from trans-equatorial climes, are enjoying their meridian siesta, in order that they may pour forth their gratitude in vesper or in matin song;" * when high above our heads the grey clouds are sailing to the far off hills, as if they were hurrying on to other worlds to bear tidings of the beauty of this; when green nooks are like to shrines dedicated to the spirit of all beauty, shut out from the world, as if too sacred for the abode of any but silence, and to be disturbed only by the murmuring of the brook, as it tumbles over the bright pebbles, and the faintest whispering of the russet-coloured grasses, where green things only grow and wave.

As Spring is the season of buds, so Summer is the time of blossoms; but not amid the rich profusion of midsummer is the blooming of plants only; for when the forest is clothed in its deepest shade of leaves, and the meadow becomes a deep billowy sea of verdure, the flowers begin to wane. But when the Spring and Summer meet each other is the time of floral luxury. When Summer first dawns there is such a plenitude of flowers, that we seem living in a world made of rainbows, and stars, and fragrant airs.

"For who would sing the flowers of June,
Though from grey morn to blazing noon,
From blazing noon to dewy eve
The chaplet of his song he weave,
Would find his summer daylight fail,
And leave half-told the pleasing tale."

On every hedge, the clematis twines its delicate trellis work, and hangs its little fairy blossoms in countless myriads. And beside it the wortlebury is coming into bloom, and decking the hedges for

* Robert Mudie.

miles with its red waxen cups. On the wayside, the red-poppy glares in the sunshine ; and the Canterbury-bell is hung with its urnshaped azure flowers ; while miles and miles of hawthorn and wild roses are winding along the old brown highways, forming to the velvet meadows snowy boundary walls, sprinkled all over with a crimson hue. Now the streams are more beautiful than ever in their fringed embroidery of flowers. The golden marsh-flag throws its sunny shadows upon the pools and streams, and hides with its broad waving leaves the humble blossoms of the blue forget-me-not,—that gentle flower—

Whose very name is Love's own poetry,
Born of the heart, and of the eye begot,
Nursed amid smiles and sighs by Constancy,
And ever saying "Love, Forget-me-not."

The white water-lily has for its companion the yellow water-lily, and they rear their heads above the piled velvet of their leaves, and look down into the clear water, to see images of their own beauty. And above these tower the white flowers of the water arrowhead ; while far out in the stream lie broad masses of green water-cresses, which rock from side to side, like islands floating on the lazy tide. In the still bays and inlets there are always multitudes of green leaves, sprinkled all over as with snow flakes, for the white crowfoot produces such a profusion of its virgin blossoms, that they make the river look like a green meadow covered with snow flakes. And among all this thick herbage and luxuriance of blossom, the water fowl glide merrily, and gather plentiful meals under the thick coverts and greenwoods which lie in the deep waters.

The very river itself seems possessed of sympathies and feelings of association, for it always goes slowly along at these sweet spots, and where there are golden uplands glittering with the blossoms of the broom and the furze, it creeps unwillingly, as if it so loved the green fields and flowery banks that it can be in no hurry to reach the sea, and would fain linger to gaze upon the blossoms and be kissed once more by some loving breeze, which has been sweeping over the flowers, and which sings a merry tune as it goes on its mission of fruitage, and to bear the good tidings of summer-time.

But as high summer comes, the fields grow weak in song, and the forest echoes sink into their seasonal repose. The nightingale, the thrush and the blackbird, and the willow wren, and the hedge sparrow, and the cuckoo, are all becoming silent, though the blackcap and the

redstart still continue to sing while a leaf of summer remains upon the trees, the former making the air resound with its full, rich modulations, which sink at times into the lowest strain, and then swell up again to a full burst of loud and joyful melody.

What a strange chain of events would be linked together, in a faithful history of one summer's day! From the first faint blushes of the eastern sky, to the death of the last twilight shadow at eventide, there are more changes and metamorphoses than the literature of the whole world recounts. When the night goes forth to meet the morning on the hills, she always gets dazzled by the grey hue which overspreads the east, even before the twilight fairly comes, and when the black pall slowly unwinds, and the soft light of a new day spreads over the yet sleeping earth, there is a quiet melancholy and a calm repose in the dim, unearthly light, which seems to belong to some other world. But no sooner has the last lingering star faded in the west, than the distant whistle of the blackbird, and the crake of the landrail, and the twitter of the first swallow, comes mingled with a clarion from the farm-yard, and floating sweetly on the cool breeze. Then the sky, so lately powdered with glitter-sparks, like a black canopy pierced with streams of fire, becomes an argent arch, fretted with fires of gold, and burns with growing streaks of flame. At last the sun himself arises in the east, that god,—

“ Who was a worship
Ere the mystery of his making was revealed,”

to whom the shepherds of Chaldea made orisons at noon, and to whom Socrates and Pythagoras of old, gave homage and obeisance. The same sun which looked down upon our rolling world for untold centuries, topping its green forests with gold, and setting its lakes and seas on fire, and which has seen it grow on from year to year in renewed beauty, ever hailing with a rapt joy, the blessed ministry of light:—

“ Lo! here the gentle lark, weary of rest,
From his moist cabinet mounts up on high,
And wakes the morning, from whose silver breast
The sun ariseth in his majesty;
Who doth the world so gloriously behold,
The cedar tops and hills seem burnished gold.” SHAKSPERE.

And as the day wanes on, the buds, and leaves, and flowers grow and blush in renewed loveliness, and the dews that lay like rounded

pearls in the chalices of the blossoms are exhaled to the skies; and the sparrows chirp and chatter, and hurry to and fro; and the un-resting swallow darts hastily over field and river, making the havoc of death among the swarms of insects which spread their powdery wings in the fierce heat of the morning sun. Towards noon, the open land gets covered with that clear trembling vapour which the Scripture describes as "the clear heat upon herbs," and which quivers and dances in the sunshine, till the eye is blinded by gazing on it. At noonday, the heat is so intense, that the very winds are weak, and not a leaf stirs; the birds are silent, and the air seems made of molten sunbeams, hovering above the earth, and parching every herb, and absorbing, as with insatiate thirst, every rill and water-brook. When the fervour of the noonday heat begins to subside, the air again becomes busy with the whirring sound of wings, and we hear sweet music in the air, like those joyous songs sung by the Rhodian children in the times of old. There are fresh swarms of flies sunning themselves in the broad light, or making giddy circles under shady boughs; having so little care for anything but sport, that it would seem they were expecting to live for ever; but they die in their conceit ere nightfall. So lives and loves each herb and creature of the earth; and man, renovated and born into a new life, grows and expands as do the leaf-buds and the flowers, in the light and glory of the gushing summer.

"Was nought around but images of rest,
 Sleep-soothing groves, and quiet lawns between,
 And flowery beds that slumbrous influence cast,
 From poppies breathed; and beds of pleasant green,
 Where never yet was creeping creature seen.
 Meantime unnumbered glittering streamlets played,
 And hurled everywhere their water sheen,
 That as they bickered through the sunny glade,
 Though restless, still themselves a lulling murmur made.

"Joined to the prattle of the purling rills,
 Were heard the lowing herds along the vale,
 And flocks loud-bleating from the distant hills,
 And vacant shepherds piping in the dale;
 And now and then sweet Philomel would wail,
 Or stockdoves plain amid the forest deep,
 That drowsy rustled to the sighing gale;
 And still a coil the grasshopper did keep,
 Yet all these mingled sounds inclined unto sleep."—THOMSON.

But each day, so glorious in its golden floods, and soft air, and shining leaves and flowers, must die in its turn, and glide like the shadows of the good and true, far away into yon down-stretching vestibules, where the eternal labyrinths are lustrous with the shining lamps of God. The heaven is free from clouds, but is melting into "one vast iris of the west;" and there the day goes down, to join the past eternity of days that have gone before, and taken all their glory with them. There is already one star twinkling upon the blue-veined forehead of the sky, while yet yon molten sea heaves and pulses, as if the day, in its last expiring agonies, was contending with the night for victory. But the fire tones down into the "odorous purple of a blushing rose," while from the sunset horizon to the eastern star one soft azure twilight reigns. The day has died—even as the dolphin, with each gasp becoming imbued with a new colour: and now all is darkness.

"Look, the world's comforter, with weary gait,
His hot day's task has ended in the west:
The owl, night's herald, shrieks—'tis very late;
The sheep are gone to fold, birds to their nest;
And coal black clouds, that shadow heaven's light,
Do summon us to part, and bid good night."

SHAKSPERE.

And the night, how lovely! how calm and still! the silence, how sublime! Not a voice of living thing, not a whisper of leaf, or bird, or insect! not a stirring of the wind—not a sound or motion to disturb this hallowed quietude! The dewy sky above bends over soft and blue, like "the inverted bell of some gigantic flower," glittering with unnumbered dewy crystal drops, and fragments of golden dust, and breathing the fragrance of heaven. And the red moon rises among the tall trees, and goes thoughtfully and silently on her march, attended by her train of lights. In the vast shadow of the night, the cool dews come from their rainbow world of waters, in company with soft summer winds playing together in the frolic glee of mirth and gaiety. Far away, the black trees rock lazily from side to side upon the broad sea of grass, like giant hulks at anchor on the deep. Grotesque shadows are everywhere lurking about like gnomes and sprites of darkness, having evil purposes in view, which they dare not utter, even to each other, lest the red and blue flowers which grow around the knotted knees of the old oaks should over-

hear them. The corn furrows look like tall rows of purple silk, waving solemnly in the soft moonlight. The wild roses droop their pearl-flushed cups with the increasing weight of dew. The daisy is sleeping silently in moonlight repose, while the zephyrs creep softly over the shut-up chalices of the flowers, as if fearful to awake them from their quiet slumbers.

Now, oh man ! if thy soul doth pant and thirst for healthier waters, and for the broad stretching lawns, where grass waves green, and and where one unfading summer flings its roses round,—wipe the labour dew from thy cheek, and with a free heart, commune with the spirit of the time : lie in the grassy arms of the dark old meadows, and feel the summer of perpetual youth upon thy brow.

All the ages of the past, dead and dusty though they be, shall unveil themselves before thee, with all of wisdom and truth for guidance, through the blood and foam which mark the grim eras of thy destiny. Thou shalt become a happy soul, no longer seeking to pluck the rose to blood thy finger with the thorn ; thy fair life shall be one blush of beauty, and one breath of love ; thy heart shall pulse with the music of a better world, and thou shall feel the bloom of Eden's morn dwelling in thy cheek for ever.

“ Father,

My heart is awed within me, when I think
Of the great miracle that still goes on,
In silence round me—the perpetual work
Of thy creation, finished, yet renewed
For ever. Written on thy works I read
The lesson of thy own eternity.
Lo ! all grow old and die ; but see, again,
How on the faltering footsteps of decay
Youth presses—ever gay and beautiful youth,
In all its beautiful forms.

* * * * *

Oh, there is not lost
One of earth's charms ; upon her bosom yet,
After the flight of untold centuries,
The freshness of her far beginning lies,
And yet shall live.”

BRYANT.

But Summer, though born to a heritage of beauty, and adorned with the richest blooms of earth, and the fairest dyes of heaven, must go back to her home when she has attained her full beauty and maturity ; and her sister, the proud and queenly Autumn, will claim her

sceptre, and walk with complacent joy over the fields where the green fruits are hanging, and through the forests where leaves begin to fall. Slowly, one by one, the leaves and flowers fade and fall ; the sweet songsters take their departure, for they cannot stay in a world which is becoming reft of floral loveliness ; and when Time shall come again, after the lapse of one winter's frost, he will see fresh flowers in fragrant blow, and when he shall meet the gentle summer,—

“ At this same place,
She'll look as lovely as of old,
For there will spring another race
Of flowers, from out the upturn'd mould,
That have been buried long ago.”

Now may we sing the farewell song of another season :—

“ Farewell to thee, sweet summer-time, thy sunny prime is o'er ;
Thy dewy light, and golden sheen, shall tinge the woods no more ;
The trees that blossom'd in thy beams stand wither'd, bare around ;
The leaves that rustled in thy breath lie faded on the ground !”

B. B. WALK.

Yes ! fare thee well, sweet Summer : take our parting tears with thee, and as thou sleepest on thy leafy couch, till the little brown birds shall awaken thee with their twitterings in the sedges, dream peacefully in thy poppy-land of slumber, and rest in quietness and joy.

Nature's welcome sounds not within the breast of one alone, and a younger hand, prompted by as wild a joy as ever burned in poet's heart, had dipped his pencil into the dye of the forest, to paint the semblance of the season :—

“ When Autumn, bleak, and sun-burnt do appear,
With his gold hand gilding the falling leaf,
Bringing up Winter to fulfil the year,
Bearing upon his back the riped sheaf ;
When all the hills with woody seed is white,
When levying fires, and lemes, do meet from far the sight :

“ When the fair apple, ruddy as even sky,
Do bend the tree unto the fructile ground,
When juicy pears, and berries of black die,
Do dance in air and call the eyne around ;
Then, be the even foul, or even fair,
Methinks my heart's joy is stained with some care.”

CHATTERTON.

But though the Saxon poets of the fields have typified Autumn as the sturdy masculine hero of the fruitage, we claim for the ruddy season of mellow fruitfulness the gentle graces of a sex more fair. We have seen the lovely spirit of the time: we have seen the gentle Autumn and her rosy train of ministers. It was at moonlight this very morn, when a voice from one of the spirits of the flowers, in hushed whispers, bade me rise. I wandered to the quiet stream to bathe before the day should break, and, lo! as I sat on a soft bank, beside the cool green rushes, I saw a sweet vision glide from out the shadowy mists. There were tall clouds resting on the earth, like the pillars of a mighty temple, and as my eyes pierced through the misty curtains which hung before them into the arches of the unsunned sky, I saw the twin-sister spirits of Summer and Autumn sitting hand-in-hand upon a throne of flowers. Summer was sorrowful, and her round laughing eyes were now dimmed with tears. The chaplet of poppies which she wore had lost the lustre of their early bloom; the garlands which robed her were withering, the sweet birds which had hovered around her, and made her heart glad with their joyous songs, were fled, all fled; the hand whose soft touch was like the benediction of moonlight, and the heart whose pulses were the throes of love, were now growing cold; and the cheek, so lately flushed with the rosy hue of joy was becoming wan in the atmosphere of death. Autumn, arrayed in robes of yellow leaves and flowers, and with her nut-brown hair enwreathed with green ferns and red berries, was bending over her dying sister, to catch her last breath as a token of the love which lived between them; and as the first light of morning flickered through the misty columns of the fane, the green ear of corn she bore in her hand took on a golden hue, and the soul of Summer was wafted to its home of flowers.

Autumn is the season of a sweet melancholy, soothing, plaintive, and soft, like the quiet cadences of a hushed heart. As the leaves thin out and the net-work of interlaced branches begins to appear, little sweet patches of landscape come peeping out across the green fields and winding-roads, and old crazy barns and grim gables and ghost-like chimney-stacks, which have been hiding snugly behind the bowering leaves, are again exposed to the broad glare of the sunlight, blushing and abashed for their own crazy aspect, and with no means of concealment. We can now get glimpses in between the boughs at the little brown nests which the birds have deserted; and

which, if left undisturbed till another Spring, will be homes once more. Where the hawthorn hung out its snowy sheets of bloom, the spider is now busy at work in weaving a tapestry of cobwebs; and there, under the broad leaves, he lurks like a fiend of darkness, to glut himself with the blood of the innocents who fall into his wily snares. Sometimes when he wakes in the morning he finds his wheel-like traps powdered all over with diamonds and pearls, and gleaming with rainbow hues and fire sparks, and just as he has managed to calculate the value of the jewelled treasures, they vanish in the morning sunbeams; and leave the grey old sinner to wreak his vengeance upon the first miserable straggler which becomes entangled in his snares. In the morning, too, the vapours grow terrible and lusty, and have fierce battles with the sun, although they are always driven off and worsted; and the bee begins to have slight touches of headache, and rises late, and when he does go forth his song is not so joyous as of yore. And the summer flowers are gone too,—yes, and the summer birds, heaven be with them wheresoever they may be. Yes, gone are the flame-like ringlets of the laburnum, gone are the buds of the pink-eyed pimpernel; gone are the cuckoo and the nightingale, the swallow, the wheatear, the ring-ousel, and the thousands of little soft-billed birds that haunt the summer woods of Britain; how could they stay when they saw the flowers sinking down to die? How could they linger when all their sweet companions of the morning were falling into early graves? How could they flit over fields where the meek speedwell lay blanched and withering; where there were no scarlet poppies; where the pimpernel and the wild thyme and the asphodel, were drooping in silent sorrow, for the twilight waning of the year? No! The fairy people of the woods have gone to other climes to spend their grief in weeping.

But although the sun has grown older, and rises later in the morning; although he has lost the youthful vigour which he had in the hours of spring, and the manly force and majesty of summer; he can yet fling fervid beams upon the green hill side, and call forth living creatures of the earth and air; for beauty lives for ever, and is with us still. The autumn crocus is still blooming sweetly in the meadows, the harebell still hangs out its azure bells to nod dreamily in the sunshine; the wild mint creeps down into moist, shady places, and lures the singing bees with its intoxicating fragrance. The hawkweeds come sprinkling into bloom along the brown pathways,

and stand about in their bewilderment gazing upwards at the sky, as though wondering if the sun was only some gigantic golden flower, and the gleaming stars which gem the darkness were such humble blossoms as themselves, planted in the blue meadows of the night. Then there are rich twilight beds of lavender, looking, as the sun goes down, like a phosphorescent sea, rippled all over its surface with crimson-crested waves; and as the night drops down from heaven, it fades into the sombre purple of the autumn moorland, and with its sweet fragrance sends the very air to sleep. On the arid and barren ground, the large ox-eye daisy stands blinking in the sunshine, with no other green or flowery thing to bear it company but the wild tansy and the knotgrass; and only cheered in its solitude by the merry chirping of the grasshopper, as he skips here and there over the leaves and stems, in the bounding exhilaration of his happy heart. Down beside the stagnant pool, and along the borders of the corn-field, the tall golden rod bears its yellow flowers, and amid the ripening corn the rich crimson pheasant's eye—the rose-a-ruby of the sweet old time—comes into bloom, beside the wild mignonette, and the thread-like spurrey, and the wild marigold. Amid the brakes and bushes of the heath and along the skirts of the old woods the gushing clusters of the nightshade mingle with its own purple blossoms, and with the brilliant coral berries of the hawthorn, and the wild rose. And there, too, the ferns come towering up in broad, rich masses of emerald green; and form little gold-gapped underwoods, like those which covered the earth in that gone-time when a tropical luxuriance prevailed in northern climes, and which still prevails in the jungled and exuberant savannahs of the south. If you peep down at the mossy roots of the bushes and old trees, where the moist darkness seems suggestive of snakes and creeping things, you will see rich golden groups of fungi, and silver sprinkled lichens, and white snowy puff-balls, and all the strange fantastic tenantry of Shakspeare's fairy land.

The woods now begin to take their deepest dye, and the hectic flush of quick decay comes upon the forest leaves before they fall. The lime becomes stained with a pale orange; the maple, poplar, and birch, lose their deep green of health, and take a wan, straw-like hue; the wild cherry, the crab, the dogwood, the spindle tree, and the guelder rose, assume different shades of burning red; the elm fringes the woods with rich autumnal brown, the oak and chestnut

mingle gold and auburn together ; and wherever the deep-green shadow of Summer hung above the earth, now sits the brightening tint of Autumn, as though Nature, listening to the warning voice of death, had endowed the leafy children with the wild beauties and sun-bright tints of oriental climes, to show her supremacy even in the last hour.

But sadder still, the trees begin to lose their leaves, and the forest becomes at last a home for skeletons and fleshless bones, the silent sepulchre of departed beauty. The first tree that becomes naked is the walnut ; the mulberry, the ash, and the horse-chestnut follow ; the pollards, and the hedge-row trees that have been lopped in spring, carry their leaves till very late ; the oaks and alders next grow bare, and the beech almost last of all, the younger beeches keeping on their clothes till their spring suits begin to fit them, and then casting them off. Green and quiet are the orchards now, with their gnarled and twisted branches hung with rosy fruits, and with their soft grassy carpets down below for the fruits to fall upon. Glorious are the old trees, as they stand hoary and blanched with age, their backs bent and their shoulders rounded with the heavy loads that they have borne from year to year, since the good old time when they were young. How gently come the golden streaks of sunlight among the richly laden branches, and how the trees nod to each other when the evening shadows flit about the homestead, and talk of the oaken tables they have covered with fruit, of the birthday and wedding feasts they have supplied, and of the many generations that have vanished like silent shadows into the regions of the dark since they were planted there, striplings, young, and vigorous, but scanty in the produce of their fruits. But when they speak of those who have gone to their last home in the old flowery churchyard, where Spring sprinkles her blossoms every year, they whisper in low husky tones, and nod, and sigh, and sometimes sing together the song of the falling leaf.

As time speeds, however, large flocks of young linnets, greenfinches, buntings, and other small birds are seen wheeling about over the wide corn fields, as if driven from their homes by parents who had lost their affection, and cast upon the world to shift for themselves. Then the birds that home with us all the winter long, the fieldfares and red-wings, come in prodigious flocks, and hover over marshy lands, and fields of stubble. Above, in the hedges, near coppices and preserves, young partridges may be seen trotting along on voyages of discovery,

and in such a hurry to see the world and to partake of its iniquities, that they cannot stay to be properly and completely hatched, but treat their mother's gentle offices with scorn, and bolt off with their shells still sticking on their heads. At mid-September too, the thrush and the blackbird, and the woodlark and willow-wren, resume their songs, and the sweet blue-throated redstart appears and sings his soft notes upon a lofty bough. Did you ever take breakfast with a landrail, or dodge him through the bottoms of the furze? If you ever do, regard him as a morning fantasy or a sprite from cloud-land; the fellow is so incarnate in his deceit, so wily and sprite-like, that, for all we know, he may be the earth-born child of the Old-one; he can die at a moment's notice when you try to chase him down, and you may handle him, tumble him about, and he will lie as still and stark as a hurdle or a boiled salmon; but just put him down and turn your back, and he will open one eye and look wistfully into futurity, not forgetting the lee side of the present, and finding all clear, will be up on his feet, and off into the shelter of the sedges, before you can say "Jack Robinson," and you may grope there for two or three minutes, and, disappointed, rise from the wet ground, just in time to see him skip away on his wings from the low bushes a furlong off, and to find yourself plastered with clay in return for your enthusiasm.

But the black grouse, the noble bird of the moorland, the stately, sweeping black game of the hill and the heather; he comes out from his summer haunts as the fruits grow ripe, and scuds along over the rocky wastes like a valiant veteran, too noble to fear, and too confiding to conceal himself. Dear old Gilbert White tells us how his father's table was oft supplied with this noble game—almost the only relic of the old forest days—but how, during his time, it had become so scarce as never to be seen. Rusticus knows him well, however, and has seen him, even in these degenerate days of railroads and painted fences, amid the quiet solitudes and green hills of Surrey. Well, there let him live in the leafy shelter of his moorland home, under the green arching boughs, and beside the blue flowers that watch the rising and the setting of the sun; where the robin and the wood-lark sing in May, and the red leaves spin about when autumn winds are sighing; where winter shakes down a virgin garment for the earth, and the voice of Nature is heard in its unbroken harmony, and where man, the despoiler, is unknown. There let him lie with his sweet companions

of the green solitude, unmolested by the hunter's dog or gun, his life as sacred to thyself as to his Maker.

The season has still its share of life and song, and the bee and the ant, and clouds of lady-birds, and blue butterflies, and leopard and goat-moths, and the gorgeous tiger-moth, and troops of flies are dancing and singing before the golden gates of heaven. Up high amid the blue dreamy clouds, the clear air seems to quiver with the play of wings, and the soft humming comes floating along, sweetly mellowed by mingling with the harvest song.

“Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?

Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,

While barred clouds bloom the soft dying day,

And touch the stubble plains with rosy hue;

There in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn

Along the river salallows, borne aloft,

Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;

And full grown lambs now bleat from hilly bourne,

Hedge crickets sing, and now, with treble soft,

The redbreast whistles from a garden croft.

KEATS.

Upon the quiet ponds the dragon-fly is busy in depositing her eggs, which she carefully lays upon the water, making at the same time a strange noise, doubtless an appeal to the spirits of the time, to quicken her brood and bring them forth in safety. The larvæ, when hatched, are the most disgusting little monsters under the sun, and may aptly serve to symbolize the fate of man, who is but a grub or worm, flapping about in the mud and mire, a sort of angel in disguise, wandering about bewildered and lost, and mumbling and wallowing in sorrow; staining his wings, and defiling his soul with sin; till the time having come for him to awake from his madness, he claps his wings, and ascends from earth to wanton in an element of light, and to rejoice amid the beauty of unending summer.

But Autumn wanes, and with it fade the golden tints and burning hues, and the warm breezes; for Winter, with chilling clasp and frosty breath, hurries like a destroyer over the fields to bury their beauties in his snow, and to blanch and wither up, with his frozen breath, the remnants of the blooming year. The harvests are gathered, the seeds are sown, the meadow becomes once more green and velvet-like as in the days of Spring: the weeds and flowers run to seed, and

stand laden with cups, and urns, and bells, each containing the unborn germs of another summer's beauty, and only waiting for the winter winds to scatter them, and the spring sunshine to fall upon them where they fall, to break into bud, and leaf, and flower, and to whisper to the passing wind that the soul of Beauty dies not. It is now upon the waning of the sunshine, and the falling of the leaf, that the bleak winds rise angrily, and the gloom of the dying year deepens in the woods and fields. We hear the plying of the constant flail mingling with the clatter of the farm-yard ; we are visited by fogs and moving mists, and heavy rains that last for days together ; upon the hill the horn of the hunter is heard, and, in the mountain solitudes, the eagle's scream ; up among craggy rifts the red deer bound, and the waterfall keeps up its peals of thunder ; and though Autumn, having ripened the fruits of Summer, and gathered into the garner the yellow fruitage of the field, must hie away to sunbright shores and islands in the glittering seas of faerie land, she leaves the spirits of the flowers to hover hither and thither, amid the leafless bowers to bewail in midnight dirges the loss of leaves and blossoms, and the joyful tide of song. It is one of these of whom the poet speaks ; for he, having been caught up by the divine ether into the regions of eternal beauty, has seen, as mortals seldom see, the shadows of created things, and has spoken with the angel-spirits of the world :—

- “ A spirit haunts the last year's hours
 Dwelling amid these yellowing bowers :
 To himself he talks ;
 For at eventide, listening earnestly,
 At his work you may hear him sob and sigh.
 In the walks
 Earthward he boweth the heavy stalks
 Of the mouldering flowers.
 Heavily hangs the broad sunflower,
 Over its grave i' the earth so chilly,
 Heavily hangs the hollyhock,
 Heavily hangs the tiger-lily.
- “ The air is damp, and hushed, and close,
 As a sick man's room when he taketh repose
 An hour before death ;
 My very heart faints, and my whole soul grieves,
 At the rich moist smell of the rotting leaves,
 And the breath
 Of the fading edges of box beneath,
 And the year's last rose.

Heavily hangs the broad sunflower
Over its grave i' the earth so chilly,
Heavily hangs the hollyhock,
Heavily hangs the tiger-lily.

TENNYSON.

The black clouds gather upon the fringes of the sky, and the mellow season of the fruitage ends. The work of Autumn is done, and the first breath of Winter is wafted over fading fields.

Dim and dreary, and dark, in sullen and silent dread; without trace of a cheering spark; like a demon in search of the dead—crushing in icy grasp, and spreading his mantle of snow; damming the brook with his feet, forbidding its stream to flow; digging the grave of beauty; blighting the buds of the earth; forbidding the growth of the year's fond flowers, by blasting their silent birth. The footfall of Winter shakes the forest and the field—his breath shrivels up the last leaf on the tree; and when the vast portals of his temple open, the season lies beyond in muffled mood and silence. Beneath the leaden roof, huge vapours hang and cluster round each other into mighty folds; up high in the dim recesses of its massive walls, the storms of midnight greet and gather; and from forth its icy and cavernous deeps, the forms of darkness go in mad and howling companies, to scatter all the green things of the earth; driving before them frightened flocks of snow, and burying, in one vast winding sheet, the remnants of the unwept year.

The last leaf fell—the hawkweed drooped and died—the fairy mullein sank into its grave; and when the wild west wind first whistled in the dark, Old Winter awoke from his summer sleep, and shaking his grizzled and hoary locks, he arose, mantled himself in morning mists; threw wide his grating doors, resumed his sceptre, and sent forth his ministers of death. Upon his craggy throne he sat, girt with a sparkling zone of ice, his meteor eye flashing in the dun darkness, as he threw his glance over his own realms of night, and sent forth his voice with a booming sound; and as the echoes rolled upward, and beat the sky like the billows of a surging sea, the north wind sang its wizard song of thunder, and the hail and sleet danced wildly in their joy. The weeping sky was frozen as it stood; the soft dews of heaven became like biting salt upon the grass; and the great morning sun, rising like a red eclipse, was startled in his march, and in his horror

gathered round him all the clouds of night, and sailed across the sky unseen.

Some have thought him feeble, and so have pictured him :

“Pale, rugged Winter bending o’er his tread,
His grizzled hair bedropped with icy dew ;
His eyes, a dusky light, congeal’d and dead,
His robe, a tinge of light ethereal blue!

“His train, a motley’d, sanguine, sable cloud,
He limps along the russet dreary moor ;
While rising whirlwinds, blasting, keen, and loud,
Roll the white surges to the sounding shore.”

CHATTERTON.

But in the angry strife of storm and darkness, and the withering chill in which the earth lies dead, his mighty potency is felt and seen. The birds knew it, and they fled ; the flowers knew it, and they died from fear.

Though all within the solemn hall of winter has a grand and terrible magnificence, the threshold by which it is approached is of a dreary and forbidding aspect. The flowers vanish from the gardens one by one, leaving behind them withered stalks and blanching seedpods ; the hedges become bare and desolate ; the ragwort and the golden rod perish in a dying embrace ; the bramble ripens, and lets fall its last fruit ; the forget-me-not and the willow herb sink into the stream for ever ; the snap-dragon, and the spurrey, and the charlock, are all torn from their homes together by a midnight storm ; and the sky, looking down upon the earth, and seeing rags where beauty was before, sends down its mighty floods to wash away those symbols of disgrace. Then the streams foam and dash in headlong fury, and hasten onward under blinding rain to sink for ever in the stormy sea ; the leaves gather into dark hollows, and dreary places, and are glad to find themselves a grave ; the twitter of the swallows comes no more between the gusts, as in the days of spring ; the clouds hurry to and fro upon the blackened sky, bewildered with the roar of winds and waters, wandering homeless, and in tears, to mingle at last with the giant shadows round the grave of nature.

The silence of mid-winter makes the desolation of the woods more melancholy and ghost-like ; for the birds and the little children—the only things besides angels which sing, as John Bunyan says—having

abandoned the fields, there is nothing but the voice of the robin to vary the sighing and hollow piping of the winds, except it be the fierce pattering of the shower, or the crash and fall of branches in the woods.

The early winter is the chosen time of hurricanes and storms. During November, the old fogs come down and walk about among the sons of men, shrouding all things in a ghostly gloom, and creeping on through wood, and brake, and briar, mingling all the paths together, making a smokelike darkness all day long, and tracking the wayfarer to his ruin. The fogs only clear away to make room for the floods; and in one night, hayricks, cottages, meadows, and huge barns, are bathed in deep sheets of water, their highest ridges peeping up here and there like mountain peaks above the ocean deep; while the rabbits, and rats, and ferrets, and harvest-mice, and shrews; friends and foes, are either drowned or huddled into corners altogether, frightened to their very hearts by the terrors of the new deluge. As the dams and sluices, and forest runnels free themselves, the winter snows begin to fall, and the frost, which heretofore had only dropped down softly in the night, comes now at broad day, and with a talismanic power arrests the waters as they leap and foam, converting each splash into a beaded gem, and each bubble into a fairy world. The few green things in the gardens become crimped and curled, as though they had been scorched; the ponds and rivers are sheeted over, and the skater tries his skill upon the glass; and the cattle, thirsted with their winter food, stand above the frozen pool, panting and lowing for drink. And the snow, how silent! wrapping all the earth in one vast gleezing shroud; how fit a symbol of the death beneath! In one night the world is made anew, trees, housetops, gardens, and fields, all painted of an everlasting white, which, with its blinding glare, seems to lie mocking at the clouds. And yet it is like the soft influences of a gentle heart, when with its offices of kindness, and of love, it surrounds all things with a vestment of purity: even in the moments of wreck and desolation, when the flowers of the heart's world are withered, and the winter of life has set in upon poor humanity's short year. Perhaps it is sent by God to foreshow the virgin whiteness of the souls that survive the winter of the grave; and which, like the new flowers which jewel the shadowy grass of another spring, will bloom into greater beauty in the green paradise above.

Underneath the snow, the workers of the season ply their tasks, for

nature, though silent, can be never still. The frost flits about the frozen mere, and sprinkles his glistening pearls, and pointed spears, and snowy crusts, on leaf and twig, and withered reed. Sometimes he encases the rushes, as they stand up brown and scathed, with a glassy covering, as though he would embalm them as choice things for future years to contemplate. Then he goes powdering the windows and the old walls with his feathery bloom, and piles up in the night huge steeples and mountain piles; pine forests, and rifted crags, great granite rocks, and intervening flowers, mingling all together with a misty, hazy frieze, with his cunning and invisible fingers. Though many flowers perished in the autumn storms, some few were spared to sing the dirges of the year. In the deep forest, where the waters leap along and chase each other through the knotted roots of aged trees, the reeds rock from side to side, and wave their plummy heads in every breeze; displaying a simple grandeur in their pensile outlines, which was never seen amid the leafy shadows of the summer. In the cold marsh, the tall bulrush stands up cutting through the white fog, and shivering his sable club at the glancing stalactites upon the matted grass; and proudly looking down at the green pennywort at his feet. In chosen spots there are still rich clouds of yellow and scarlet berries hanging on the trees, though here and there they are torn and ragged, and look like homeless vagrants skulking under withered leaves.

As winter steals apace, the fungi spring up in strange fantastic shapes, and cluster with the velvet mosses and the golden lichens on the boles of old trees, and in the damp hidden nooks of the common. On bits of rotten wood, the Scottish siller cups put forth their leathery caps, each filled with glistening beads, which the wives of old translated into fairy money. In December, the rosemary comes into flower, and brings with it refreshing memories of the olden time; when it was used to stir up the foaming Christmas tankard, and dipped into the drinking bowls at weddings, and borne before the bride as she walked to the altar, and as an emblem of remembrance, strewn upon the grave. Here and there we meet a rustic porch, wreathed all over with the sweet pale blossoms of the China rose; and all intermingled with light fairy foliage, which makes it seem as though we had lighted on a summer-land of beauty, till we look around and feel more keenly than ever the desolation of surrounding fields. Then come the gorgeous blossoms of the hellebore or Christmas rose; and in the gardens, the lauristinas blossom; and in the

greenhouse the wax-like camellia, and the starry chrysanthemum. But, best of all is the noble holly, with its coral berries sprinkled amid its glossy leaves, wearing a bold front, and defying winter, and braving unhurt all his storm and darkness.

“Below a circling fence its leaves are seen,
 Wrinkled and keen;
 No grazing cattle through their prickly round
 Can reach to wound;
 But as they grow, where nothing is to fear,
 Smooth and unarmed the pointless leaves appear.

“And as, when all the summer trees are seen
 So bright and green,
 The holly leaves their fadeless hues display,
 Less bright than they;
 But, when the bare and wintry woods we see,
 What then so cheerful as the holly-tree?

“So serious should my youth appear among
 The thoughtless throng;
 So would I seem amid the young and gay,
 More grave than they;
 That in my age as cheerful I might be,
 As the green winter of the holly-tree.”

SOUTHEY.

The new year dawns, and the frost deepens, and the stillness becomes more profound. All the trees are leafless, except the few which never shed their green at all; and the branches stand out in beautiful outline against the sky, as though traced upon it with a pencil. There is no end of delicate lace-like patterns, and exquisite embroidery. But William Cobbett, in his “Rural Rides,” has given us a picture of the winter trees, and for us to attempt a description after him would be no less than sacrilege.

The robin and the wren are among the few birds that sing in January; and great flights of starlings enliven the desolated fields. Sparrows, and fieldfares, and larks, and redwings, hover about on river banks, searching for insects; and the blue titmouse may be seen bobbing about in the orchard, pecking off the buds which are infected with insects. In the woods there is the woodpecker and the nuthatch, and occasional flocks of wood pigeons, and the golden plovers are busy after every thaw in searching for the worms in the unfrozen swamps. But time passes, and pale lines of green begin to

glimmer where the corn was sown, and the little buds grow coil within coil, and burst forth in their emerald beauty to brave the biting breeze ; and in the quiet copse the snowdrop and the primrose bloom, and the daisies in the meadows have new stars of snow ; and when the throstle first whistles in the storm, the young Spring wakes from her winter sleep, and calls forth her leafy children of beauty. Forthwith new troops of things in numberless forms spring into the embrace of life, and the old work goes on again as it has since the morning of creation, when the round world was launched into the great deep, peopled with its tribes of plants and creatures obedient to the changes ordained by Him who performed the work and "saw that it was good."

So is the year completed, so is beauty renewed, so is life re-born, and man, the beholder of many winters and the watcher of many springs, gathers a lesson from the changes of the time which, in some sense, foreshadows his own destiny.

How inaudibly glide the seasons one upon the other ! The seed that falls upon the ground, the rounded dew-drops, the gushing flower and the withered leaf "all have the silent mission appointed them, of turning the mighty wheel on which the seasons roll ;" and so, while one season is waning and passing away, the work of the next is in silent progress, and thus there is no pause, no rest, no jar, but the fulfilment of one mighty cycle of change, from year to year, from year to year, again. Thus all the changes of the earth pass round, each imprinting its semblance on the brow of man, and writing its lessons on his heart ; that like the green earth beneath his feet, he may, through cold and heat, through storm and sun, be ever blossoming with good works, and yielding refreshing fruit from the inexhaustible soil of a regenerated heart.



FLORAL CUSTOMS, SUPERSTITIONS, AND HISTORIES.

“Seemed all the rest in beauty to excel,
Crowned with a rosie girlond, that right well
Did her beseeme ; and ever as the crew
About her daunst, sweet flowers that fair did smell,
And fragrant odours they upon her threw.”

FAIRIE QUEEN.

THE real history of a nation—the history of its character—may always be better read in its popular customs than in chronicles of its wars, or chronologies of its kings. There is a peculiar character in all old English customs—a greenness, a sunny freshness, a vitality and energy, a character speaking of green fields and flowers, of life and beauty. We are indebted for much of this to our Saxon ancestors. The Saxons were a rural people. Their language and their habits had a verdurous freshness, an odour of new-mown hay. There is a vigour in all the Anglo-Saxon literature, peculiar to itself, from glorious old Chaucer, who drank inspiration from the “dayseyes” beneath the oaks at Castle Donnington, down to William Cobbett, the last writer of Saxon.

The reason is, that before men acquire the vices and evil tendencies which are deemed marks of civilisation, they live nearer to nature. There is a closer bond of sympathy between them and the fields and woods. But rural customs, breathing, as they do, a language full of deep meaning, are suffered to die away, and are replaced by the vices and iniquities of an artificial existence, and these at last come to be mistaken for civilisation.

“The mute expressions of sweet nature’s voices
Are drowned amid the turmoil of life’s noises,
Where thoughts of fear and darkness come unbidden,
And love, and hope, are unto silence chidden.”

H. G. ADAMS.

So much has been said and sung of flowers in all climes and all ages, that the subject is rife with innumerable associations. In ancient

times divinities and beauties were crowned with chaplets of flowers ; objects of heavenly essence were blended and united with those of earthly love ; flowers graced the altar, the temple, the palace, and the tomb ; and the connection of flowers with the most sacred and venerable treasures continues to this day. Wherever a people becomes imbued with the love of the beautiful, there do they set up shrines, and altars, and images, as visible tokens of invisible things ; and there do they offer flowers as meet sacrifice to propitiate the deities they homage, and to sanctify the loves they cherish, becoming children when they are most truly men.

Flora was married to Zephyrus, by whom she was passionately beloved, and she received from him the privilege of presiding over flowers, and of enjoying perpetual youth. Ovid represents her crowned with flowers, and carrying the horn of plenty in her hand. She dwells amid the green foliage of the forest, whence she comes forth in her magic car, attended with a train of flowers, exquisite forms of perfumed loveliness "in tender hues of rainbow lustre dyed."

————— In her leafy car
Flora descends to dress the expecting earth,
Awake the germs, and call the buds to birth ;
Bids each hybernacle its cell unfold,
And open silken leaves and eyes of gold.

"The worship of Flora, among the heathen nations, may be traced up to very early days. She was the object of religious veneration among the Phocians and the Sabines, long before the foundation of Rome ; and the early Greeks worshipped her under the name of Chloris. The Romans instituted a festival in honour of Flora as early as the time of Romulus, as a kind of rejoicing at the appearance of the blossoms, which they welcomed as the harbingers of fruits. The festival games of Floralia were not, however, regularly instituted until five hundred and sixteen years after the foundation of Rome, when, on consulting the celebrated books of the Sybil, it was ordained that the feast should be annually kept on the 28th day of April, that is, four days before the calends of May."

"The taste for flowers came to Rome from the East ; garlands were suspended at the gates or in the temples, where feasts or solemn rejoicings were held, and at all places where public joy and gaiety were desired."* Flowers became a necessary part in all their festivals,

* Phillips's Floral Emblems.

and it was a redeeming feature in those brilliant entertainments, that, at their desserts, the number of flowers far exceeded that of their fruits ; and although physical luxuries were too much sought by the ancients to permit them the full enjoyment of “a feast of reason, and a flow of soul,” yet the mingling of flowers with these festivals is in itself an interesting characteristic. They not only regarded flowers as ministering to the gratification of the senses, but they believed that certain plants had the power of averting the intoxicating effects of the wines.

Cicero says that, at the annual festivals of the *Terminalia*, the peasants were all crowned with flowers. “Sacrifices among the Romans were of different kinds; the place erected for offerings was called *ara*, or *altare*, an altar; it was erected with leaves and grass, adorned with flowers, and bound with woollen fillets.” “In the triumphal processions of Rome the streets were strewed with flowers, and the altars smoked with incense.”*

One of the finest of the “Lays of ancient Rome,” is on the feast of the twin brothers, who won for Rome the battle of Lake Regillus, when the “Eternal City” was in the time of her pristine vigour, and had not yet fallen into luxury and effeminacy. The *Io triumphe* swells upon the gale, the multitude throng the streets, the walls resound with the pealing of trumpets, and the shouts of the people, and the “seven hilled city” echoes the sounds of triumph and joy.

“To day the doors and windows
Are hung with garlands all,
From Castor in the Forum,
To Mars without the wall;
Each knight is robed in purple,
With olive each is crowned;
A gallant war-horse under each,
Paws haughtily the ground.

* * *

On ride they to the Forum,
While laurel boughs and flowers,
From housetops and from windows,
Fall on their crests in showers.”

MACAULAY.

In the mythology of Greece flowers play an important part. The

* Irving's Antiquities.

dedication of the poppy to the goddess of the harvest is associated with a pleasing custom. The poets tell us that the seeds of the white poppy were the first food tasted by the disconsolate Ceres, after the loss of her beloved daughter Proserpine, who was stolen by Pluto when she was gathering flowers. The ancients had a very different opinion of the poppy from that entertained in modern times; for, instead of regarding it as injurious to the corn fields, they looked upon it as a trophy of triumph, and believed that no corn was good except it had a mixture of poppies. And when the reaper offered to Ceres his thanksgivings for the harvest, the ears of ripe corn and the seeds of the poppy served for an expression of his gratitude. It was the white poppy which was thus consecrated by the Greeks, as professor Martyn has shown in his notes on Virgil. The ancient statues of Ceres were decorated with ears of corn mingled with the heads of poppies. This elegant decoration ornaments the colossal statue of Ceres, which was brought to this country from the temple of Eleusis by Dr. Clarke, and which, after being shipwrecked off Beachy Head, in fulfilment of the predictions of the poor Eleusinians, who believed that the loss of it would be followed by the annual failure of their harvests, was eventually rescued from destruction, and deposited with safety at Cambridge, where it is now to be seen.

The great reverence which was paid to many plants by the ancients, rendered the odorous myrtle an object of great regard amongst them. The Arabs have a tradition that "Adam fell down from paradise with three things:—the myrtle, which is the chief of sweet scented flowers in this world; an ear of wheat, which is the chief of all kinds of food in this world; and pressed dates, which are the chief of the fruits of this world."

The Greeks dedicated the myrtle to Venus, either because it grows near the sea, whence she is said to have arisen, or because its sweet and unfading foliage renders it a suitable tribute to the goddess of beauty.

The Roman ladies were accustomed to bathe beneath myrtle trees on the first of April; and after having bathed, they adorned their heads with its leaves, and offered sacrifices at the shrine of Venus.

The myrtle was held sacred also for its medicinal powers, and the invalid partook of its berries with a hopeful heart. At Athens the magistrates always wore wreaths of flowers on their heads, as symbolical of their office, and the myrtle was usually in request for this

purpose. There were artists whose profession it was to form garlands, and to construct them of flowers which were symbolical of certain ideas. The language of these garlands was as well understood by the people as the oral language of the country.

The myrtle was highly prized by the Romans as an accompaniment at their festivals; it was steeped in their wine to improve its flavour, and to add an invigorating quality, and was the usual emblem of festivity.

“Search not where the curious rose
Beyond his season loitering grows;
But beneath the mantling vine
While I quaff the flowing wine,
The myrtle's wreath shall crown our brows,
While you shall wait and I carouse.”

HORACE.

“Garlands of every green, and every scent,
From vales deflowered, or forest trees branch rent,
In baskets of bright osiered gold were brought,
High as the handles heaped, to suit the thought
Of every guest; that each, as he did please,
Might fancy fit his brows, silk pillowed at his ease.”

KEATS.

These ancient customs have survived to the present time; and the enjoyment of festive occasions is greatly enhanced by the decoration of houses with wreaths and boughs of evergreens. The box shrub was formerly used for decking houses in this country. Before the age of railroads and beershops, the English homes were beautified throughout the whole year by the flowers and shrubs of the seasons. Herrick records these long-lost customs:—

“When yew is out, the birch comes in,
And many flowers beside;
Both of a fresh and fragrant kin,
To honour Whitsuntide.

Green rushes then, and scented bents,
With cooler oaken boughs,
Come in for comely ornaments,
To re-adorn the house.”

In the processions which took place at Christmas in the olden time, Father Christmas and his attendants were personated : New Year's Gift was represented by a man "wearing a blue coat, and holding in his hand a sprig of rosemary." The Christmas board was decked with branches of laurel, and box, and rosemary, with shining holly and mistletoe.

The holly was dedicated to Saturn, and the celebration of the festivals of that god being held in December, the Romans decorated their houses with its branches ; and the early Christians, to avoid persecution, continued the practice of adorning their houses with holly when they held their own festival of Christmas, and hence its use in modern times. The mistletoe was dedicated by the old Saxons, to Friga, the goddess of love and beauty, and the modern custom of kissing under the mistletoe has its origin in the ancient use of the plant. Beautiful associations are these, seen in their social and poetic aspect. Hearty and cheering are the Christmas sports, sacred to the noblest heart are the facts on which they rest. As Christmas comes we seem to sail back into a land of enchantment, where only the fervour and piety of boyhood can find a home ; we hear the village bells, stirring up the wintry silence with their silvery sound ; we hear the rustic waits chanting some simple carol, and in homely rhymes telling the story of the birth of Jesus ; and the sounds, mellowed by the still darkness, weave around us, till, in the emotion of awakened feelings, which till then had slumbered in our hearts, we cling to each other with a new fondness, and thank God for Christmas. Then are the rejoicings and communings of hearts, old and young, rich and poor, mingling together with no other desire but to be happy, and to stand as brothers and sisters on the threshold of a new year. Then the ruddy flames from Christmas logs go dancing and leaping upward in their joy, and the board smokes and groans with English cheer, and the music rings upon the ear, and the dance begins, and talk, and laughter, and the noise of merry games, mingle together ; and the lights sparkle, and the holly boughs upon the walls glisten with the ruddiness of summer, and the mistletoe crouches slyly in a quiet corner, and becomes a chosen benison for lovers. God bless the dear girls—its worth a world of torture and distraction to have Christmas once again, that we may kiss them.

The belief is very general that our May-day customs are derived from the ancient festivals of the goddess Flora. The May-day re-

joicings have fallen almost entirely into disuse of late years ; although, three or four centuries ago, they were universally kept. There are, however, a few rural spots of the country, where modern innovations have not entirely destroyed old customs ; and there a May-day queen is chosen and crowned with flowers, and the day is the chief holiday of the year. The primitive character of the May-day sports has been longest retained in some parts of Cornwall ; and, at the village of Helston, the youths and maidens dress themselves in holiday attire on May-day, and adorn themselves with wreaths of flowers, and dance merrily through the houses, scattering flowers before them.

The custom of decorating the houses with hawthorn boughs on May-day still prevails in the classic city of Athens. The May-day customs in England were much discountenanced by the reformers. They looked upon them as remnants of superstition ; and so in truth they were, although they had grown into a new shape, and had acquired new tendencies. Many preachers exerted themselves to suppress the boisterous and profligate revelries of May-day. Bishop Latimer was once about to preach in a village on the first of May, or Robin Hood's day, as it was called, but he could get no audience, for all the youths and maidens "were gone a-maying." "I found," said he, "the churches fast locked. I tarried there half an houre, or more, and at last the key was found ; one of the parish came to me and says, 'Syr, this is a busy day with us, we cannot hear you ; it is Robin Hood's day. The parish are gone abroad to gather for Robin Hood. I pray you let them not.' So," says the good bishop, "I was fain to give place to Robin Hood and his men."

A sad lament was uttered for many years after the reformation of the calendar, by elderly dames in villages, that science should have interfered with the seasons, and thus have brought the May-day before its time. A pathetic wailing went up and down the country to the cry of "Give us back our eleven days !" The poor fools thought that time was made of days and hours. They had no Festus to tell them that—

"Life's more than breath and the quick round of blood ;
'Tis a great spirit, and a busy heart.
We live in deeds, not years ; in thoughts, not breaths ;
In feelings, not in fingers on a dial."

A strange custom prevailed, in past years, of lighting bonfires on

St. John's day—the 24th of June. This was founded on a passage of Holy Writ, in which John is represented as a shining and burning light. In London these vigils were kept with much boisterous merriment. "Every man's door was shaded with green birch, long fennel, St. John's-wort, orpine, white lilies, and the like, ornamented with garlands of beautiful flowers." Young men and maidens, carrying posies in their hands, and having their brows encircled with vervain and St. John's-wort, danced round the blazing bonfires, and threw the flowers into it, at the same time invoking the protection of the saint, and praying him to grant that the coming year might be less fruitful in sorrow, and more profuse in happiness than the one just passed. The St. John's-wort was a plant possessing great protective virtues and magical powers. In Lorraine, the peasant will not, on any account, cut down his grass until St. John's-day; and whether the season be backward or forward is all the same to him—the dead saint has more to do with the matter than the living sun. In the days of chivalry, when two persons were to decide a quarrel by combat, and thereby reduce moral truth and justice to a question of brute force, an oath was administered to each knight, requiring him to "Swear that ye had no stone of virtue, nor hearbe of virtue, nor charm, nor experiment, nor none other enchantment; and that ye trust in none other things properly, but in God, and your body and your brave quarrel."

Of all the old customs which deserve to be cherished and held as sacred, those of decking the bride with flowers we esteem the first. What can have a more exalting influence upon the mind of a young maiden, than to be surrounded with flowers when walking to the altar? Flowers are at all times fit adornments for beauty, and may, to a bride especially, convey a sentiment of hope, and trust, and confiding love.

"Among the Latins, the bride, on her wedding day, was dressed in a long white robe with a purple fringe; her face was covered with a red veil, and her head was crowned with flowers. On arriving at the house of her husband, she bound woollen fillets round the door-posts, which were adorned with flowers, and anointed with the fat of wolves, to avert enchantment."* At the present day, a similar custom prevails in Wales. Wreaths and garlands are worn at weddings,

* Adams's Roman Antiquities.

and suspended in the place of worship. This practice was strongly denounced as a "device of Satan," and a certain hot-headed professor of Christianity endeavoured to excommunicate some young persons for wearing crowns of flowers. "If this be heathenish," says the good Bishop Heber, "Heaven help the wicked! But I hope you will not suspect that I shall lend any countenance to this kind of ecclesiastical tyranny (which forbid such rites and observances), or consent to men's consciences being burdened with restrictions foreign to the cheerful spirit of the gospel."

In former times, it was customary to strew the floor of the village church with rushes and flags. The sweet flag was much used for this purpose, for its delightful fragrance. The custom still exists in some few spots, and, among others, at Norwich. The old cathedral is, on certain days, scented with the perfume of the sweet flag, profusely strewn over its floors. The flowering rush, one of the most lovely of river-side plants, was at one time much in request for these strewings; for, "It is of all others the finest and most pleasant to behold, and serveth very well for the decking and trimming-up of houses, because of the beauty and braverie thereof."

In the early ages of Christianity, a custom arose of honouring wells and fountains with the titles of saints and martyrs; and pilgrimages were regularly made to them for the performances of religious ceremonies. At these times, nosegays and chaplets of flowers were thrown into the wells, to invoke the blessing of the saint. In many quiet rural spots this custom is still retained. At Penkridge, in Staffordshire, and at Wolverhampton, the people go, on Ascension-day, to adorn their wells with boughs and flowers. A recent traveller in Turkey describes an interesting ceremony, witnessed by him, performed at times of excessive drought. "At dusk, the village children, walking two and two, and each carrying a bunch of wild flowers, drew near the cistern in their turn, and sang to one of the thrilling melodies of the country, a hymn of supplication."

"We seek the cooling fountain,
 Alas! we seek in vain;
 The cloud that crowns the mountain
 Melts not away in rain.
 The stream is shrunk, which through our plain
 Once glided bright and clear;
 Oh! ope the secret springs again—
 Allah! Father!—hear!"

MISS PARDOE.

All nations have endeavoured to convey, by flowers, those sentiments which they found unutterable in words, and this especially in the floral customs attending the hallowed rites of burial. The Greeks lavished flowers in their funeral ceremonies ; they crowned the dead with them, and they were scattered in the path of the mourners. It is said that, when Orpheus bewailed the fate of his beloved Euridyce, the sweet sounds of his lyre caused a forest of elms to spring up. The idea is but an expression of the sympathy between man's heart and the symbols of outward nature. The Greeks decked the funeral pyre with garlands of flowers, and rendered it odorous with spices and other fragrant things. A statue, called the funeral genius, was usually placed in the groves, wherein were deposited the ashes of the departed.

“ They feared not death, whose calm and gracious thought
 Of the last hour had settled thus in thee :
 They, who thy wreath of pallid roses wrought,
 And laid thy head upon the forest tree,
 As that of one, by music's dreamy close,
 On the wood violets lulled to deep repose.”

MRS. HEMANS.

With the Romans, it was considered a duty incumbent on children to deck with flowers the bodies and places of sepulture of their parents ; and the parents were required to pay similar honours to the graves of their offspring. The despairing Dido immolated herself while crowned with

“ Sad cypress, vervain, yew, ———
 And every baleful flower denoting death.”

And Diodorous tells us that, when the Hindoo widow is burned upon the funeral pyre of her husband, she is “ crowned by the women of her house.” At Tripoli, the coffins are adorned with rich bouquets of flowers, when the funeral ceremony takes place. Tully tells us of a lady of high rank, who erected for her deceased daughter one of the grandest mausoleums in Tripoli, and kept it regularly supplied with the choicest flowers, placed in beautiful vases ; and, in addition to these, a quantity of fresh Arabian jasmine blossoms, threaded on thin slips of the palm leaf, were hung in festoons and tassels about this revered sepulchre. Chateaubriand tells us of the funeral customs of the North American Indians, who bury their dead

among aged oaks, in secluded parts of the forest, where the hushed silence of the solitude steals sadly upon the heart, like soft moonlight, shining upon graves. "We then saw newly-married brides, who, desiring the joys of maternity, sought among the flowers the soul of the infant, which they imagined to be hovering around. At last came the mother, and, placing a bunch of maize and lilies upon the grave, she seated herself upon the turf, and thus addressed her departed child 'Why should I deplore thy early grave, O my first-born? When the newly-fledged bird first seeks his food, he finds many bitter grains. Thou never felt the pangs of sorrow, and thy heart was never polluted by the poisonous breath of men. The rose that is nipped in the bud, dies enclosed with all its perfumes, like thee, my son, with all thy innocence.'"

Byron knew the value of flowers in association with death; when Medora, the Corsair's bride, is stretched lifeless on the bier—

"——— The cold flowers her colder hand contained
In that last grasp so tenderly were strained,
As if she scarcely felt, but feigned a sleep,
And made it almost mockery to weep."

In the neighbourhood of Mecca, Burckhardt found planted, at the extremity of almost every grave, a species of aloe, whose Arabic name, *saber*, signifies *patience*; symbolical of the great lesson taught by death. The Greeks held the myrtle in the highest reverence as a funeral flower, and crowned the corpse with wreaths of its fragrant foliage. The fathers of the church endeavoured to check this practice, but the people clung fondly to the custom, and continued to enwreath the dead with flowers, and to hang up chaplets in churches, and to lay them on tombs. And in some green hamlets of Britain the custom still prevails. In the south of England, chaplets of white roses are borne by village maidens in funeral processions; and often when some fair flower like themselves, or a gentle infant—a yet folded blossom—is being carried to its early tomb, these funeral flowers are watered by the tears of true sorrow. In many parts of Wales, the mourners carry sprigs of rosemary and yew, and when the coffin is lowered into the yawning grave, these are strewed upon it. The graves are planted with shrubs and flowers, and regularly weeded and tended, and visited on the eve of Whitsuntide, and other festivals. Thus is the grave sanctified by the offerings of love and friend-

ship. The flowers which spring out of the dust of the departed, serve as tokens of the frailty of human loveliness, and tell of that better life to which the lost ones have departed. What a sanctity breathes in these funeral ceremonies ! what holiness pervades them ! How do they speak from the heart to the heart, and convey a poetry of incomparable worth ! Surely, if flowers are so fitted to mingle with our daily life, and to shed their light upon the varied scenes through which we have to pass, they must be yet more sacred as companions in death. Good, indeed, to honour the memory of departed worth and beauty, and to shed a smile of love above that holy ground—the grave. Yet, why are not flowers scattered when the man is born ? Is not birth as solemn a thing as death ? Why not be equally sorrowful when the infant is first ushered, in pain and imbecility, into the world, as when it is early snatched away ? Or, rather, why be sorrowful at all at any of God's dispensations ?

It is an interesting fact, that the word Druid was derived from the Greek *δρῦς* "oak," from the custom of the Druids teaching in forests. This is supported by Pliny, Salmasius, and Vigenere. Bovet obtains the word from the old British or Celtic *derw*, "oak," whence he takes *δρῦς* to be derived. It matters little now which language should have the priority. The Druids considered the oak a sacred plant ; it was the emblem and token of the Almighty's presence, and all that grew upon it was hallowed, and considered as coming direct from heaven. They adorned their heads with chaplets of its leaves and fruit, and the altars were strewed with it, and encircled with its boughs. The mistletoe, which grew upon the oak, was considered the most sacred gift of heaven ; it gave fertility to man and beast, and was a specific against all kinds of poison. It was solemnly sought on the sixth day of the moon, and, when found, was hailed with the most rapturous joy. Then preparations were made for performing the sacrifice. Two white bulls were brought and fastened to the tree by the horns, and the Arch-Druid, robed in white, and attended by a great concourse of people, ascended the tree to crop the mistletoe with a golden pruning-hook, while the people shouted their joyful acclamations. Having secured the sacred plant, he descended the tree, the bulls were sacrificed, and the Deity invoked to bless his benign gift, and render it efficacious in those distempers in which it should be administered. The people of Gaul and Britain devolved the care of their health on the Druids, and these priests

were gifted with the power of curing all diseases ; and in such high esteem were they held, that the most implicit faith was reposed in them to accomplish things utterly impossible. It was the prevailing opinion of the nations of antiquity, that all internal diseases proceeded from the anger of the gods ; and that the only way of obtaining relief, was by applying to the priests to appease their anger by religious rites, and propitiatory sacrifices. Indeed, the Gauls and Britons frequently sacrificed one man as the most effectual means of curing another. "Nobody doubts," says Pliny, "that magic derived its origin from medicine, and that by its flattering and delusive promises, it came to be regarded as the most sublime and sacred part of the art of healing."

The well known plant, the vervain, was a Druidical plant. By certain mystical performances with it, they were enabled to predict future events. After libations of honey had been poured forth, it was gathered with solemn ceremony at the rising of the dog-star, on a moonless night ; for its virtue could not be obtained if gathered when either the sun or moon looked upon it. In digging it up, the left hand only was used. It was then waved aloft, and the leaves, stalk, and root, dried separately in the shade. It is described in their writings, as "cheerful, placid vervain, which has been borne aloft, and kept apart from the moon."

From it they prepared an ointment, which was efficacious not only in curing all diseases, but in conciliating friendships, and procuring the accomplishment of every wish.

" Yes, wrapped in the veil of thy lowly flower,
They say that a powerful influence dwells,
And that duly culled in the star-bright hour,
Thou bindest the heart by thy powerful spells."

The *hypericum*, or common St. John's-wort, was another Druidical plant ; and is still looked upon with superstitious reverence in many rural districts, as peculiarly fitted for a spell or charm. Many curious ceremonies are still performed in villages on Midsummer-eve, and the succeeding morning, distinguished as the day dedicated to St John. These performances have a peculiar interest to young maidens and bachelors, and like those of Halloween, in Scotland, are believed by the superstitious observers to lift the veil of futurity for the coming year, and enable the inquirers to prognosticate their lot for married

or single life. These practices still prevail in many parts of the continent. In Lower Saxony, the young girls gather sprigs of St. John's-wort, on the eve of St. John, and secretly suspend them on the walls of their chambers, with certain mysterious ceremonies. The state of the plant on the following morning, indicates their future fate. If fresh and undrooping, it foretells a prosperous marriage; if fading and dying, the reverse. The plant is influenced by the condition in which it is placed, and those who have damp walls are the more likely to have prosperous marriages than those whose walls are as dry as they should be. There is wisdom in this; the sooner the former are married and comfortably housed, the safer are they from attacks of rheumatism. There is a pretty German legend of this superstition, of which we present a translation—

“ The young maid stole through the cottage door,
And blushed as she sought the plant of power.
‘Thou silver glow-worm, oh lend me thy light!
I must gather the mystic St. John's-wort to-night;
The wonderful herb whose leaf will decide
If the coming year shall make me a bride.’

And the glow-worm came
With its silvery flame,
And sparkled and shone
Through the night of St. John;
And soon as the young maid her love-knot tied,
With noiseless tread
To her chamber she sped
Where the lovely moon her white beams shed.
‘Bloom here, bloom here, thou plant of power,
To deck the young maid in her bridal hour!’
But it drooped its head, that plant of power,
And died the mute death of the voiceless flower;
And a withered wreath on the ground it lay,
More meet for a burial than a bridal day.
And when a year was passed away,
All pale on her bier the young maid lay!
And the glow-worm came
With its silvery flame,
And sparkled and shone
Through the night of St. John,
As they closed the cold grave o’er the maid’s cold clay.”

A very large class of superstitions have had their origin in the love of analogy, which forms so prominent a characteristic of the human

mind. The leaves of the lung-wort are spotted like the animal lungs : hence its name and the faith in its curative powers in pulmonary complaints. The lichen, called oak-lungs, has been so called from the same supposed resemblance to the structure of the lungs. It is remarkable how many plants were included among the remedies for bites of scorpions and snakes in the old treatises on Herbs. The *Echium vulgare* was formerly known by the name of " viper's bugloss." The spotted stem resembles the skin of a snake, and the seeds are each like a viper's head ; and our forefathers, who looked upon these marks as signs of corresponding virtues, inferred that the plant must prove the best remedy for the bite of a viper. Gerard says, the sight of the viper's bugloss would drive vipers away from the spot, and the seed of the larkspur had a still more powerful influence. " Its virtues are so forcible, that the herbe only thrown before the scorpion, or any other venomous beast, causeth them to be without force and strength to hurt ; insomuch that they cannot move or stir until the herbe be taken away." In old times it was universally believed that King Solomon had impressed his seal upon a plant, known to botanists as the *Convallaria multiflora*, and hence the plant was called Solomon's Seal ; and of course possessed innumerable virtues. From these exalted opinions of the qualities of many plants, have arisen the many strange names by which they are known—as holy herb, honour and praise, Paul's betony, fluellin, scorpion grass, palsy wort, saintfoin, holy hay, wicked herb, &c.

Not the least interesting are those methods resorted to by our ancestors to keep evil spirits at bay. The mountain ash, or rowan of the rock, was a famous plant for this purpose ; it was planted near to houses, and, together with the admirable plan of nailing a horse-shoe over the door, would certainly preserve the inmates from witches. It is still believed by the Highland peasantry, that a branch of the rowan carried in the hand will defend the bearer from charms of witchcraft. The dairymaid, as she drives her cows to the pasture, carries a branch of this tree to preserve them from danger, for witches are mightily fond of tormenting cows and spoiling the milk ; but verily they turn pale, and tremble from head to foot, when they behold the rowan-tree. Do you know, reader, that at Midsummer-night the witches hold their revelries on the Hartz mountains, and that they come from all parts of the earth to meet together at that festive time ? This is their chorus :—

"The stubble is yellow, the corn is green,
 Now to the brocken the witches go;
 The mighty multitude here may be seen
 Gathering, wizard and witch, below,
 Sir Urean, he sitteth aloft in the air;
 Hey over stock! and hey over stone!
 'Twixt witches and incubi what shall be done?
 Tell it who dare! tell it who dare!"

GOETHE.

If thou fearest the witches, reader, go and find the fern-seed, and render thyself invisible. Nay, do not smile, there are witches now tormenting the wicked and the idle. Man's very heart is torn asunder by them, when he forgets to do his duty. Bovet tells us of one who went to gather fern-seed, and the evil spirits whisked about his ears like bullets, and sometimes struck his hat and other parts of his body. And, although he believed he had secured a quantity in papers, and a box full besides, he found all empty. If he had gone with a true heart, and walking upright in God's sunshine, they could no more have dared to check him, than to assail an angel. That this power of invisibility may be obtained by means of fern-seed, we have the authority of the great poet himself, who knew all the mysteries of heaven and earth, "We have a recipe of fern-seed—we walk invisible." A similar illustration occurs in Beaumont and Fletcher—"Why, did you think that you had Gyges' ring, or the herb that gives invisibility?" And Ben Jonson says—"I had no medicine, Sir, to go invisible; no fern-seed in my pocket." If the fern was gathered on the night of St. John, no end of mysteries might be performed by it; diseases might be cured, evil influences prevented; witches utterly quashed, and the future destiny of the individual rendered most certain. Dioscorides esteems it the best of all charms against witchcraft, and Bovet expresses his firm conviction that these "are of the devil's own contriving; that having once ensnared men to an obedience to his rules, he may with more facility oblige them to a stricter vassalage." Pliny tells us, in a mysterious manner, that it must be extremely valuable against the bites of serpents, for those creatures are seldom, if ever, found beneath it. One species of fern, *Polypodium vulgare*, was considered by the old writers on herbs as a certain specific against melancholy; and children placed upon a bed of green fern would certainly be cured of the rickets.

Beautiful indeed, and teeming with rich poetry, are those supersti-

tions of the East, by which lovers hold unseen communion with each other by means of flowers. They breathe a lofty spirituality, and flow direct from the fresh and inexhaustible springs of the human heart. Maidens, whose lovers are far away, gather certain plants, and cast them upon the surface of a flowing river, with various mysterious ceremonies. They believe that they thus convey their remembrances to those distant friends whom they hold most dear. And by watching the plants as they float away, they obtain an omen of the fortune which has befallen the adventurer, and a prescience of his destiny. Thomas Moore has given a graphic account of one of these ceremonies.

“As they passed along a sequestered river after sunset, they saw a young Hindoo girl upon the bank, whose employment seemed to them so strange, that they stopped their palanquins to observe her. She had lighted a small lamp, filled with oil of cocoa, and placing it in an earthen dish, *adorned with a wreath of flowers*, had committed it with a trembling hand to the stream, and was now anxiously watching its progress down the current, heedless of the gay calvacade which had drawn up beside her. LALLA ROOKH was all curiosity;—when one of her attendants, who had lived upon the banks of the Ganges (where this ceremony is so prevalent, that often in the dusk of the evening, the river is seen glittering all over with lights, like the Oton-tala, or Sea of Stars), informed the princess that it was the usual way in which the friends of those who had gone on dangerous voyages offered up their vows for their safe return. If the lamp sunk immediately, the omen was disastrous; but if it went shining down the stream, and continued burning till entirely out of sight, the return of the beloved object was considered as certain.”—LALLA ROOKH.

“One sends a vow to him afar—
Oh! never can the heart
Know half the love it cherishes
Until it comes to part.

“A thousand things are then recalled,
Though scarcely marked at first;
But lingering thoughts in after hours
Betray how they were nursed.

“Ah! love takes many shapes; at first
It comes as flashes fly,
That bear the lightnings on their wings,
And then in darkness die.

“ But after comes a steadier light,
 A long and lasting dream;
 Like the full heaven which the sun
 Flings down on life's dark stream.

“ There's a love that in the soul
 Burns silent and alone,
 Though all of earthly happiness
 Has long, too long been flown.

“ And she, amid her gladder friends,
 Seems pensive on the strand,
 And keeps her fairy bark unlaunched
 Beside her trembling hand.”

L. E. L.

If any mortal man could become a participator in the prayers and soul breathings of these Hindoo girls when about to commit their flowers to the stream, he would be incomparably blessed. The same superstition prevails in Russia. There they collect certain plants, and watch their decay, to obtain omens of the safe return of absent friends. Von Teitz tells us that, after the feast of Whitsuntide, the young Russian maidens seek the banks of the Neva, and fling in its waters wreaths of flowers. These are tokens of affection to absent friends. Our own modern Anacreon thus addresses the river in which *his* supposed wreaths are cast:—

“ Flow on, thou shining river ;
 But ere thou reach the sea,
 Seek Ella's bow'r, and give her
 The wreaths I fling o'er thee,
 And tell her thus :—If she'll be mine,
 The current of our lives shall be
 With joys along their course to shine
 Like those sweet flowers on thee.”

And who shall say that there are not kind angels ever hovering above us to bear these missives, and to breathe our hopes, and wishes, and dearest aspirations into the souls of those we love, and surrounding them with sweet images and recollections ; and bringing in return the sighs they heave, and the tears they shed for us. Truly the visions that sometimes surround us, and the voices that sometimes whisper in our ears, would seem to be wafted from afar, and to come to us laden with sweet odours, and holy breathings of love and affection.

Many countries and places have been named after the flowers for which they were noted, and most nations have adopted flowers as their national emblems. There is some doubt as to the true Scottish thistle. Tradition affirms that the unhappy and ill-fated Mary, Queen of Scots, planted the beautiful milk thistle on the rocky cliffs near Dumbarton Castle, but this is not regarded as the true Scottish thistle. The cotton thistle is the one cultivated by Scotchmen as the true one, and it appears best entitled to be regarded as the national insignia, on account of the hard and sharp spines with which it is beset, and which so well accord with the proud, defiant motto which accompanies it. The following circumstance is said to have given rise to the adoption of the thistle as the national emblem:—When the Danes were invading Scotland, and, according to their accustomed mode of warfare, were making upon the enemy under cover of the darkness, while the Scottish army were asleep; the Danes had just reached the Scottish camp, when a Dane, happening to place his naked foot upon the sharp spines of a thistle, involuntarily uttered a cry of pain. This roused the slumbering warriors, who soon routed the invaders, and redeemed the country from their hands.

Buchanan relates, that when the Danes invaded Scotland, the Scots gathered the berries of the deadly nightshade, and mingled the juice with the bread and drink, with which, by their truce, they were to supply the Danes, and which so intoxicated them, that the Scots killed the greater part of Sweno's army while they were asleep. The effects of belladonna, or deadly nightshade, on the human system, are, usually, dilatation of the pupils, obscurity of vision, giddiness, delirium, and sometimes death. It is believed that it was the juice of this plant which produced such remarkable and fatal effects upon the Roman soldiers during their retreat from the Parthians.

Not only have many countries adopted flowers to express their character, but kings and warriors have done the same, as though men were compelled to go to nature for language, when they would express the heroism and devotion with which they felt themselves imbued. Miss Strickland in her elegant and highly-talented work, the "Queens of England," has given an historical explanation of the name of one of our favourite field flowers, the forget-me-not. She says that "the royal adventurer, Henry of Lancaster—the banished and aspiring Lancaster—appears to have been the person who gave to the *myosotis arvensis*, or forget-me-not, its emblematical and

poetical meaning, by writing it, at the period of his exile, on his collar of S.S., with the initial letter of his *mot*, or watchword, *Souveigne vous de moy*; thus rendering it the symbol of remembrance, and, like the subsequent fatal roses of York, and Lancaster, and Stuart, the lily of Bourbon, and the violet of Napoleon, an historical flower. Few of those who, at parting, exchange this simple, touching appeal to memory, are aware of the fact, that it was first used as such by a royal Plantagenet prince, who was, perhaps, indebted to the agency of this mystic blossom for the crown of England. It was with his hostess, at that time wife of the Duke of Bretagne, that Henry exchanged this token of good-will and remembrance."

The common hawthorn is one of the most interesting of our wild plants, as to its historical associations. It was the distinguishing badge of the royal house of Tudor. Miss Strickland states, in the work we have already quoted, that when the body of Richard III. was slain at Redmore Heath, it was plundered of its armour and ornaments. "The crown was hidden by a soldier in a hawthorn bush, but was soon found, and carried back to Lord Stanley, who placed it on the head of his son-in-law, saluting him by the title of Henry VII., while the victorious army sang *Te Deum* on the blood-stained heath.

'Oh! Redmore, then it seemed thy name was not in vain!'

It was in memory of this picturesque fact, that the red-berried hawthorn once sheltered the crown of England, that the house of Tudor assumed the device of a crown in a bush of fruited hawthorn. The proverb of 'Cleave to the crown though it hang on a bush,' alludes to the same circumstance."

The hawthorn is a memorial plant of that unhappy and ill-fated flower, the lovely Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots. At the eastern side of the village of Duddingstone there stood an ancient hawthorn, stately in dimensions, and picturesque in character. It had smiled in the summer's sun, and had braved the winter's sleet for three good centuries. It stood on the side of the footpath, hanging over the road, and all the spring and summer time it delighted the wayfarer with its goodly foliage, and stood a brave old tree, promising to produce its clusters of fragrant blossoms for many a century to come. But a tremendous tempest in 1836, which made sad havoc among the aged sons of the forest, and strewed the coast with shat-

tered wrecks and lifeless bodies, uprooted the old tree. And so perished, while yet beautiful and vigorous, "Queen Mary's thorn."

Tradition tells that, when in childhood, the "good regent," Murray, was at play with his half-sister, Mary Stuart, the future rivals determined, in their childish sport, to plant each a favourite tree; and the growths of these were to be regarded, respectively, as omens of their future destinies. Mary selected her favourite plant, a hawthorn, of which she planted several others during her life. James Stuart, the future regent, chose for his representative a hardy young oak. When next the young queen rambled at Duddingstone, she sought out the rival plants, and rejoiced to find that her own hawthorn alone remained, which she deemed a fair foreshadowing of future happiness and prosperity. Alas! for the futility of earthly hopes; while Mary was rejoicing and dreaming of a bright future of glory and greatness, the news came to her that she must leave the scenes of her childhood, and become an exile in the court of France, there to seek new ties and state alliances. She flung herself down upon the green turf beside her much-loved hawthorn tree, and gave expression to her grief in burning tears. That burst of impassioned grief, enough almost to rend her young heart, when about to bid a long farewell to the cherished scenes of her childhood, was indeed a true harbinger of the long life of suffering and sorrow, which was to end upon the block at Fotheringay. Another memorial of Mary Stuart is the Winfield Oak, which stands beside the grey old towers of Winfield Castle. Here the unhappy queen pined in solitude and woe for the space of nine years, under the iron rule of her stern jailer, the Countess of Shrewsbury. The grey mossy towers of Winfield Castle are clothed with matted and interwoven clusters of green ivy, and the crumbling walls, now falling into ruins, possess sublime and melancholy beauty, and tell many sad tales of the past. A projecting building, on the right of the Castle-keep, is still called Queen Mary's Tower. Here the imprisoned queen resided, and here she gave expression to the anguish of her heart; and here she watched day by day, for the signals of her long-tried and faithful adherent, Leonard Dacre, during his numerous attempts to aid her escape, and in which he was never successful. After an imprisonment of eighteen years, the poor captive was laid in that narrow cell, the last home of all, where the weary are at rest, and the broken-hearted lie in peace.

It would be impossible for us to pass unnoticed one of the most

absorbing events in human history, as an historical fact connected with flowers. We allude to the use of certain plants as a means of poisoning, and more particularly to the death of Socrates, by hemlock. The hemlock is a common plant throughout Europe, and a frequent inhabitant of road-sides and waste places. The spotted hemlock, *conium maculatum*, is an active poison. The symptoms which it produces in the human subject are giddiness, headache, drowsiness, lividity of the countenance, coldness of the extremities, increasing insensibility, and eventually, death.

The plant has attracted the notice of mankind from all antiquity. Several of the sacred writers refer to it. Moses speaks of it under the word *rosh*, translated *gall* in the authorized version, but more correctly rendered *hemlock*. It is generally believed to be the *κῶνειον* (*koneion*) of the Greek authors, and the *cicuta* of the Romans. This opinion was held both by Linnæus and Lamarck, and if correct, the common spotted hemlock of the fields is the same plant as that from which the state poison of Athens was prepared, and which proved fatal therefore to Socrates, the good Phocian, and Theamenes.

Socrates, the most celebrated philosopher of antiquity, was the son of a sculptor; and it is said that the beautiful proportions and elegant forms, which the marble received from the chisel, suggested to him the first idea of perfection; and this idea becoming more exalted, he became convinced that as, throughout the universe harmony prevails, so should there be a just relation between man's actions and his duties. He said, the gods require that we should honour and obey them, and offer to them sacrifices, in which the purity of the heart is of more importance than the magnificence of the offering—that we should render the Divine Being the most noble worship, for Divine favour was the result of fervent piety, upborne by hope and confidence. He acknowledged one God, the father and preserver of the universe, and under his command were inferior deities formed by his hand, and invested by him with power and authority. Imbued with the most profound and awful respect for the Supreme Being, he prostrated himself before the sun at his rising, regarding him as the representative of the Great Unknown—the god of light and life. His system of philosophy was founded on the good and evil which influence the destinies of men. Virtue is permanent and unchangeable; the truly good inspires the soul with tranquility for the present and security for the future. As ignorance is the utmost extremity of

evil, so wisdom is the greatest good. Wisdom is the exalted reason which God has given man to guide him through the dark, uncertain paths of life. The man who is guided by that pure celestial light is just and true, he will be frugal and temperate, because he knows that excess of pleasure is followed by loss of health, reputation and fortune: he possesses true fortitude of heart, because he sees the extent of danger, and knows the necessity of braving it. He thence concluded that all virtue is wisdom and truth, and must be extended by the exercise of benevolence; and vice is the error which must produce all evils. Confident in his doctrines, Socrates conceived the noble desire of dissipating, if not too late, the looming clouds of error and prejudice, by which the human race were degraded, and of instructing men in their duties; and of leading them on to virtue and truth. To this glorious ministry he devoted every moment of his life, and discharged it with a zealous enthusiasm, and a love of his fellow-men. He sought to converse with them in squares and public walks, and instructed them in their true interests, and they learned with surprise, that happiness consists in being good parents, fond husbands, and virtuous citizens; and by the language of reason and friendship he sought to lead them to virtue and happiness. He taught that the fewer our wants, the nearer we approach to the Divine nature, that idleness degrades, not labour; that the glory of the sage consists in his being righteous, without affecting to appear so. That it is better to die with honour, than to live in ignominy, and to conclude with one of those startling truths on which he insisted,—that it is the greatest of deceptions to pretend to govern and conduct men, without possessing the requisite abilities. And after teaching this, he declared that he knew nothing.

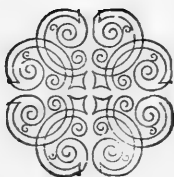
Socrates was attended by a number of illustrious pupils, whom he instructed by his exemplary life and doctrines. He spoke with freedom on every subject, religious as well as civil; and this independence of spirit, and visible superiority of mind, created him many enemies; but, as his character was irreproachable, the voice of malevolence was silent. Yet, Aristophanes undertook, at the instigation of Melitus—a frigid poet, destitute of ability, and who would have been forgotten long since but for his villany—to ridicule the venerable character of Socrates upon the stage; and, when once the way was open to calumny and defamation, the fickle populace paid no reverence to the philosopher whom they had before regarded with the most profound respect.

Melitus, together with Anitus and Lycon, stood forth to criminate him; they roused up the public feeling against him and his disciples, and brought their false charges before the five hundred judges. He was accused of corrupting the youth of Athens, of making innovations in the religion of the Greeks, and of ridiculing the gods. In his defence he modestly said, that what little knowledge he possessed was applied to the service of the Athenians; it was his wish to make his fellow citizens happy, and it was a duty which he performed at the special command of the gods, "Whose authority," said he, emphatically to his judges, "I regard more than yours." Such language, uttered with the firmness of innocence, and the dignity of virtue, and by a man who was accused of a capital crime, astonished and irritated the tribunal. Socrates was condemned; and when he was condemned, according to the Athenian Laws, to pass sentence on himself, he said, "For my attempts to teach the Athenian youth justice and moderation, and render the rest of my countrymen more happy, let me be maintained at the public expense the remaining years of my life in the Prytaneum; an honour, O Athenians! which I deserve more than the victors of the Olympic games. They make their countrymen more happy in appearance, but I have made you so in reality." This exasperated the judges in the highest degree; and he was condemned to drink hemlock. He received the sentence with tranquility, for his whole life had been spent in learning to die. Before he left the tribunal, he recommended to their care his defenceless children, and said that to die was a pleasure, since he was going to hold converse with the greatest heroes of antiquity.

The solemn celebration of the Delian festivals prevented his execution for thirty days, during which time he was confined in prison, and loaded with irons. He disregarded the intercession of his friends; and when it was in his power, he refused to escape from the prison. When the hour to drink the poison arrived, the executioner presented him the cup, with tears in his eyes. Socrates received it with composure, and after making a libation to the gods, raised it to his lips, while breathing a prayer;—tears gushed from every eye, and the prison resounded with lamentations. He said, "My friends, I sent away the women that I might not behold such weakness; resume your courage, the man who renounces pleasure has laboured to adorn his soul. Death should be accompanied by good omens." So saying,

he drank it with an unaltered countenance, and soon after expired, in the 70th year of his age.

And so, the man who had been most brave in battle, and whose courage, even in the trying hour of death, never forsook him ; who, though poor, received no salary for his instructions, and accepted not the offers of his disciples ; who had been raised to the rank of a senator, and had presided in the assemblies of the people ; who had snatched Alcibiades from the hand of the enemy, and had saved the life of the youthful Zenophon ; who had lived a life of devotion to his fellow-men, and had sacrificed all worldly pleasures for their good :—this best of men, and wisest of philosophers, was now a sacrifice to a frigid verse-writer, whose jealousy had been kindled by the serpent which dwelt in his own wicked breast. And his good spirit passed away to those bright regions where the souls of good men dwell in righteousness ; and where those aspirations, which were their daily food on earth, become living realities, and glories unceasing.



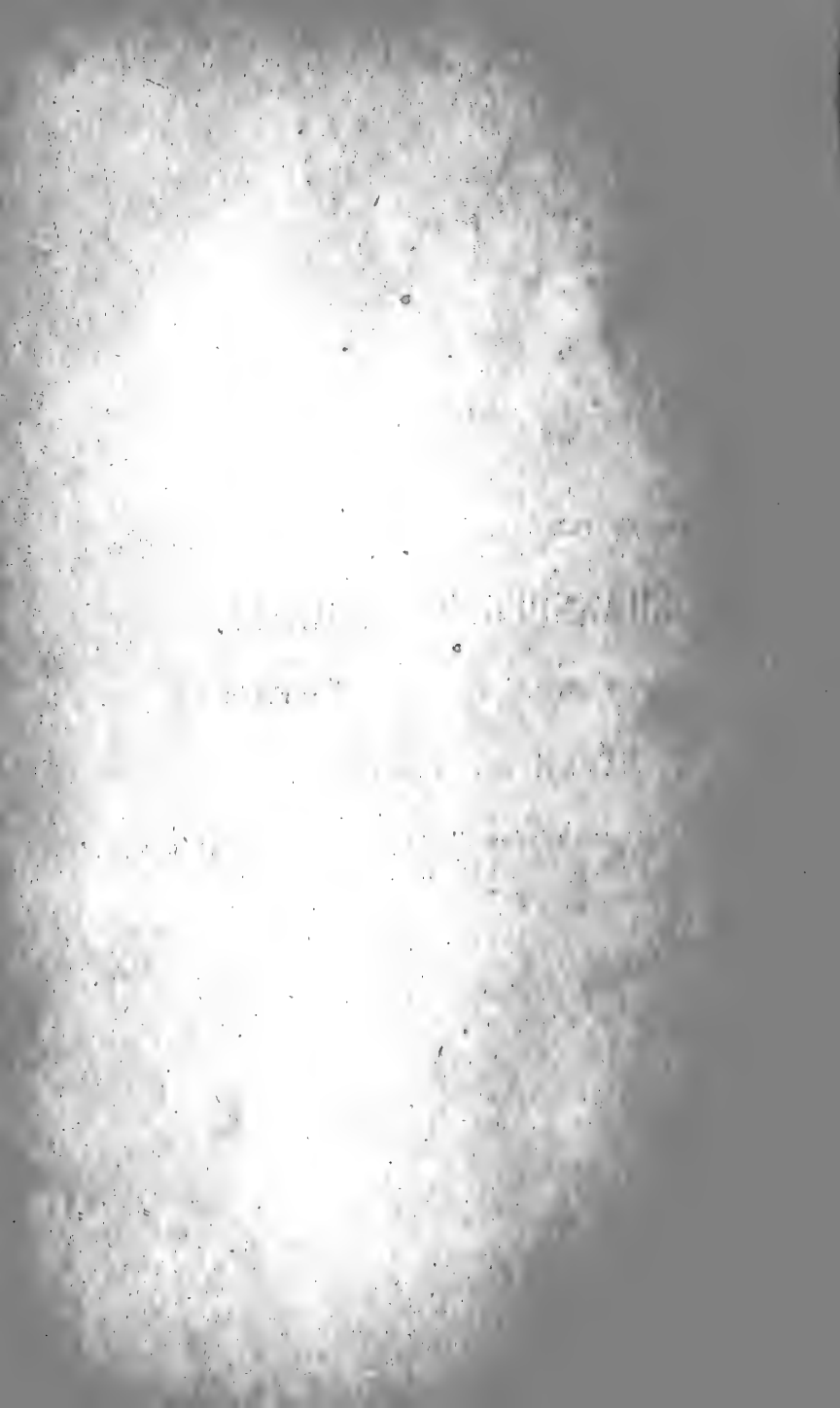
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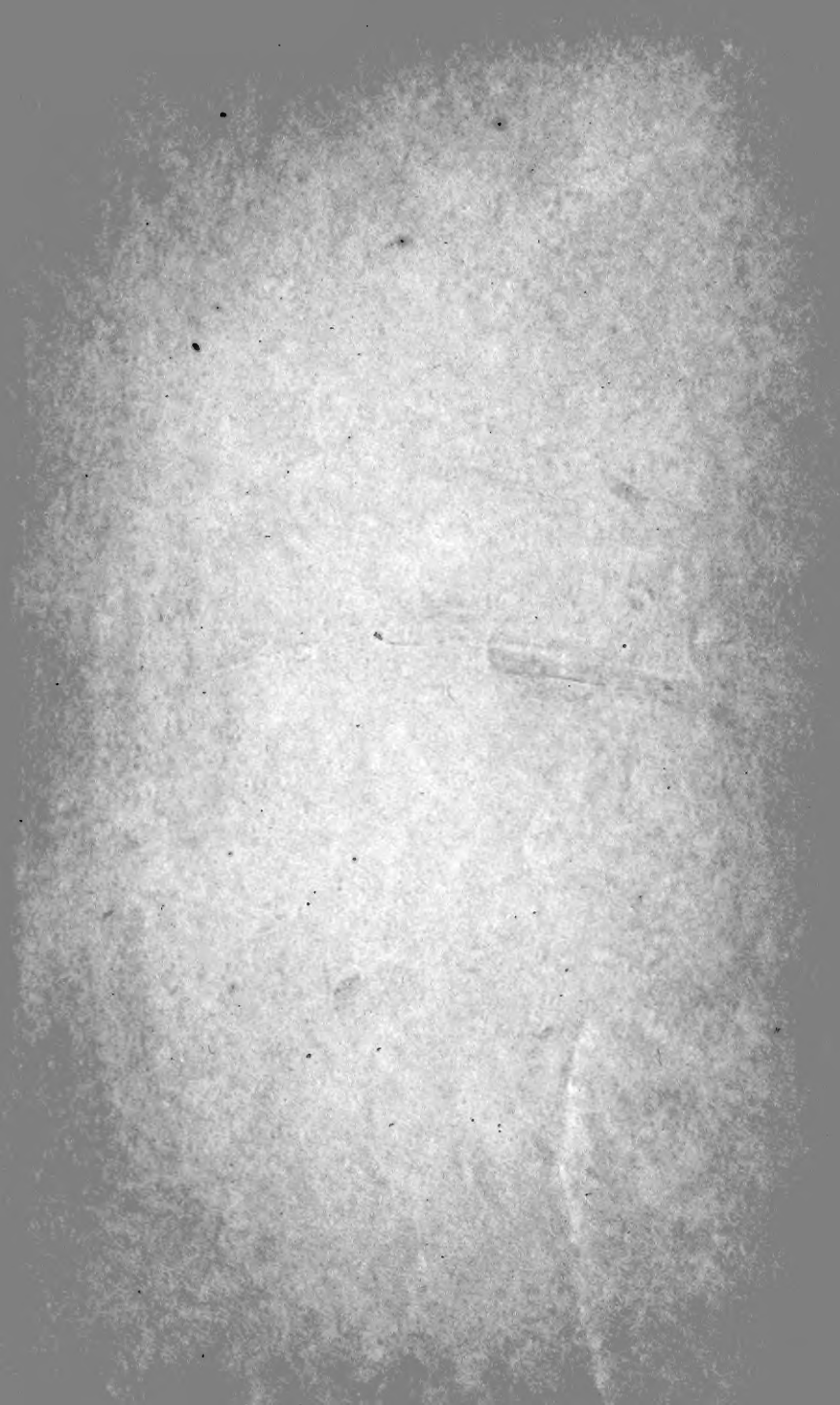
SHAKSPERE'S FLOWERS.

Essays on the Flowers mentioned in the works of Shakspeare. .

BY SHIRLEY HIBBERD

AUTHOR OF "SUMMER SONGS," "BRAMBLES AND BAY LEAVES,"
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